

## Comparative Study of Dark Triad and Well-Being between Upper and Lower Socio-Economic Classes in India

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### ABSTRACT

The understanding and experience of personality traits and well-being among individuals from different socioeconomic classes in India have evolved significantly. This study examines the expression of the Dark Triad personality traits (Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy) and well-being, encompassing eudaimonic and hedonic dimensions. It was hypothesized that there would be no significant differences in the expression of the Dark Triad traits and well-being between upper and lower socioeconomic classes. A sample of 60 participants aged 35–55 was first assessed for socioeconomic status using Kuppaswamy's SES Scale. Following this, their Dark Triad traits were measured using the Short Dark Triad (SD3) scale, and well-being—encompassing both eudaimonic and hedonic aspects—was evaluated using the Mental Health Continuum – Short Form (MHC-SF). The data were subjected to descriptive analysis, tests of normality, and t-tests. Results indicate that there is no statistically significant difference in Dark Triad traits between individuals from lower and higher socioeconomic classes, suggesting that SES may not be a primary determinant of these traits. Instead, other factors such as personality, life experiences, and social influences may play a more substantial role. Findings highlight the need to consider socioeconomic factors in discussions of well-being while recognizing the complex interplay of influences on personality traits. The implications of these findings extend to psychological assessment and intervention strategies tailored to different socioeconomic contexts in India.

**Keywords:** *Dark Triad, Socioeconomic Class, Well-being, Personality Traits, Mental Health*

### *History of the 'Dark Triad' and its prevalence in the non-clinical population*

In her book “Aversive Interpersonal Behaviours”, Kowalski focuses on symbolically mediated aversiveness as opposed to the traditional idea that people often use aversive interpersonal behaviours to influence and control the behaviours of others and there is some gratification to it (Redfield, 1993). Kowalski (1997) states that like a stimulus that is physically aversive, social behaviours are also determined when the people are deprived of valued outcomes or impose undesired outcomes, hence, they adapt behaviours that can be rendered to be inappropriate or undesirable from the perspective of normative behaviours. These behaviours can be adapted by people for various reasons such as need to belong, conformity, defence mechanism etc. She draws a framework where essentially there is a perpetrator and a victim. Of these several behaviours classified by Kowalski, three have

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attracted the most empirical attention, namely, Narcissism, Machiavellianism and Psychopathy which are characterized as the “Dark triad”.

In their paper titled “The Dark Triad of personality: Narcissism, Machiavellianism and psychopathy”, Paulhus and Williams (2002), describes the Dark Triad traits as “offensive yet non-pathological personalities”. This paper marks one of the first reports of measuring dark triad traits as named by the authors to be Machiavellianism, Subclinical Narcissism, and Subclinical Psychopathy, in the normal i.e. non-clinical population. Machiavellians are more likely to behave in a cold and manipulative fashion in laboratory and real-world studies. (Christie & Geis, 1970). This word is often used to describe someone who is cunning, sneaky and lacks an elaborate moral code. The construct of subclinical or ‘normal’ narcissism includes grandiosity, entitlement, dominance, and superiority. The adaptation of psychopathy to the subclinical sphere is the most recent of the three. The central character elements for subclinical Psychopathy include high impulsivity and thrill-seeking along with low empathy and anxiety (Hare, 1985; Lilienfeld & Andrews, 1996).

The personalities who make up the "Dark Triad" have several characteristics in common. Each of the three depicts a socially malevolent character to differing degrees in each individual, with propensities for violence, emotional coldness, deceit, and self-promotion. In the clinical literature, the correlates among the triad have been noticed for some years (e.g., Hart & Hare, 1998). The study of empirical connections in normal populations has been made possible by the recent creation of non-clinical measurements of all three domains. This has led to empirical evidence of the overlap of (a) Narcissism with Psychopathy (Gustafson & Ritzer, 1995), (b) Machiavellianism with Psychopathy (Fehr, Samsom, & Paulhus, 1992; McHoskey, Worzel, & Szyarto, 1998), and (c) Machiavellianism with Narcissism (McHoskey, 1995). Given these correlations, it is possible that the Dark Triad of constructs could be similar in normal population i.e. the non-clinical samples.

In recent years, several studies have sought to establish a biopsychosocial model of psychological constructs. Although findings remain inconclusive, evidence suggests that socially aversive personality traits may involve genetic predispositions, often activated by shared environmental influences. Psychologically, such individuals demonstrate atypical cognitive patterns, such as prioritizing pragmatic reasoning over moral considerations, and tend to adopt avoidant attachment styles marked by mistrust and reliance on manipulation in relationships. Socially, the Dark Triad traits significantly influence interpersonal dynamics and broader societal functioning.

### **Well-being**

In recent times, the emergence of positive psychology has attracted a lot of attention leading to significant amount of research being conducted on Well-being. As rightfully highlighted by Alexandrova- the concern with well-being should be at the very root of modern social science. This form of knowledge should be devoted towards the advancement of well-being in-turn advancing the field of social science itself. In addition to the study of Psychology, the studies surrounding well-being have found their place in various disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, economics, literature, health, communication, public policy, political sciences etc.

The conceptualisation of well-being has been deliberately researched to provide a comprehensive theoretical and operational model for the same. Over the years, many

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definitions have emerged such as Diener et. Al (1999) defines well-being as subjective and made up of life satisfaction, positive affect, and negative affect. Carol Ryff gave a six-dimensional model of well-being that includes autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations, purpose in life and self-acceptance. In general, there are two schools of thought where well-being was seen as either as Hedonic and Eudemonic. Hedonic view focuses on happiness that is seen as the totality of pleasurable experiences.

According to Corey Keyes, well-being is a subjective evaluation of optimal functioning in three areas: Emotional, Psychological and Social. He defines well-being as the presence of something positive versus the absence of something negative and in terms of positive feelings or positive functioning. More specifically well-being is defined by the positive feelings (e.g. Happiness) experienced by the individual how these experiences effect the functioning of this individual. This particular direction makes way to the first line of research i.e. Hedonic well-being which quintessentially is referred to as, emotional well-being. The second line of research is based on eudemonic well-being which is when one realises their potential and draws out their principles of morality, this includes Psychological and social well-being meaning how is an individual perceiving their environments.

Personality traits, especially those linked to academic achievement and socioemotional skills, are significantly shaped by socioeconomic position (SES), this is also the primary framework of the Social Cognitive Career theory. This implies that although personality qualities are evenly distributed throughout various socioeconomic categories, privileged individuals gain disproportionately that promotes success. Additionally, structural advantages linked to higher SES such as access to resources and supportive environments and high stimulating environments, synergistically enhance the development of these traits, leading to better outcomes in terms of academic and economic prowess. Children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may struggle to develop similar traits due to a lack of stimulation, resulting in limited opportunities for educational opportunities and personal growth. Thus, the research invites a more comprehensive outlook on how interventions aimed at fostering socio-emotional skills need to be sensitive to the influence of SES to effectively reduce social inequality and promote equitable opportunities for all students in varying socioeconomic status.

The connection between socially aversive characteristics and socioeconomic status (SES) is a key element in the general understanding of overall happiness. The stress, the criticalness, and the depression that the individuals from lower SES backgrounds face sometimes can be brought on by a repeated perception of inadequacy and self-doubt which are the features of the impostor syndrome (Bakhtiar & Kutty, 2024). This, in psychology, is a situation in which the feeling of being worse than others despite being outwardly successful exists, thus the person begins to have thoughts that they are less worthy and through this, their personal development will be less than that of other people. As these individuals struggle with the inevitable complex cognitive constructs arising from self-esteem, they may find it difficult to cultivate the much-needed socio-emotional skills, which can be detrimental to their personal growth and hence contribute to social inequality. On the other hand, people from the higher SES brackets usually have a better outcome, because they are more likely to live in environments that are more favourable with more access to the necessary resources that would help develop their character forming competences like social skills. It shows not only the differences in personality traits but also the importance of social factors in the well-being of the people related to educational achievement. Tackling these problems requires some

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interventions that are directed to the improvement of socio-emotional skills as well as those that take into consideration the broader social context. We can make the landscape that's fairer if everybody can do as well as they want by the improvement of accessibility and support to students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Several theories over the years have directed towards effects of social positioning on personality and life outcomes. To employ a few important ones would be, ***Social Comparison Theory (Leon Festinger, 1954)*** - The core of social comparison theory lies in understanding who individuals compare themselves to and why. These processes include: (i) individuals value their opinions and abilities by comparing them with the opinions and abilities of others. (ii) In order to do this, they chose homogeneity among individual so they could find more similar shared characteristics than the distinct ones. The way in which these individuals with Dark Triad traits may engage in social comparisons that influences their well-being notably vary across various socioeconomic statuses. ***Social Cognitive Theory (Albert Bandura, 1997)***- Bandura's theory is not just nature vs. nurture; it is rather the 'reciprocal determinism' that shows the connection of the individual's behaviour and the environment. Financial crises, lack of employment prospects, exposure to violence and crime and the difficulties connected with gaining access to education can be the causes of development of traits leading to the distrust of institutions and lack of abundance feeling can evoke manipulative practices as a protection against poverty. Maslow's theory provides a framework for understanding how unmet needs can contribute to the expression of Dark Triad traits. Individuals struggling to meet their needs at one level may compensate by exhibiting behaviours associated with the Dark Triad. Basic physical necessities' (food protection safety) are much perilous. ***Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) (Robert W. Lent, Steven D. Brown, and Gail Hackett 1994)*** - While primarily about career choices, SCCT highlights how socioeconomic status and personality traits intersect to shape career trajectories and subsequent well-being. Individuals may be forced to take low-paying unstable jobs. In these cases, self-serving tendencies could be amplified to meet the unrealistic expectations. The combination of limited career options and Dark Triad traits can lead to job dissatisfaction, stress and a sense of being trapped.

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Age and socioeconomic status (SES) are major determinants of personality and well-being, yet their influence on the Dark Triad—Machiavellianism, Narcissism, and Psychopathy—remains underexplored. SES shapes access to resources, opportunities, and social environments, while life stages bring distinct psychological demands that affect personality development.

Studies consistently show SES to be positively associated with subjective well-being, with subjective perceptions often outweighing objective measures (Agarwal et al., 2011; Tan et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2023). Parental SES also cascades into socio-emotional skills and academic outcomes (Lechner et al., 2021).

Research on the Dark Triad highlights the role of early life environments. Jonason et al. (2016) found Machiavellianism and Narcissism linked to privileged but unpredictable contexts, while Psychopathy related to harsh, unstable conditions. Cross-cultural studies confirm variations in trait expression (Aluja et al., 2022).

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Age moderates these associations, with SES becoming increasingly significant in later life (Luo & Mroczek, 2022). Lower SES is also linked to poorer psychological and physical health outcomes across adulthood (Kivimäki et al., 2020).

Regarding well-being, Narcissism often shows positive associations, while Psychopathy is consistently negative; Machiavellianism remains context-dependent (Aghababaei & Błachnio, 2015; Liu et al., 2021; Gomez et al., 2023). Emerging evidence from South Asia suggests cultural contexts shape these dynamics (Thakur & Basu, 2018; Mushtaq et al., 2020).

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### *Hypotheses*

- H1: There is no difference between individuals in Upper & Lower socioeconomic class with respect to Narcissism.
- H2: There is no difference between individuals in Upper & Lower socioeconomic class with respect to Psychopathy.
- H3: There is no difference between individuals in Upper & Lower socioeconomic class with respect to Machiavellianism.
- H4: There is no difference between individuals in Upper & Lower socioeconomic class with respect to Well-being.
- H4.1: There is no difference between individuals in Upper & Lower socioeconomic class with respect to Hedonic well-being.
- H4.2: There is no difference between individuals in Upper & Lower socioeconomic class with respect to Eudemonic well-being.

#### *Objectives*

- To study if there are any differences between Upper and Lower socioeconomic class with respect to the Dark Triad measured by Narcissism, Psychopathy and Machiavellianism.
- To study if there are any differences between Upper and Lower socioeconomic class with respect to Well-being i.e., Hedonic and Eudemonic well-being.

#### **Study Variables**

##### **Quasi-Independent Variable**

Socioeconomic Status (SES): Categorized into upper and lower socioeconomic classes.

##### **Dependent Variables**

Dark Triad Traits

Well-Being which includes Eudemonic and Hedonic well-being.

##### **Control Variables**

Age (35–55 years)

Urban Population

#### **Research design**

Quasi-Experimental research design- examining the difference between Lower and Upper Socioeconomic classes without manipulating any of them with respect to the Dark Triad and Well-being.

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### Sample size

The study included a total of 60 participants, with 30 individuals from the upper socioeconomic class and 30 individuals from the lower socioeconomic class. Participants were selected based on the Kuppuswamy Socioeconomic Scale, which categorizes SES based on education, occupation, and family income.

### Sampling technique

Purposive sampling was employed in this study which is a non-probability sampling technique where participants are selected based on specific characteristics that align with the study's objectives. In this study, purposive sampling is used to ensure that the participants belong to distinct socioeconomic classes (upper and lower SES) and fall within a specific age group i.e., 35 to 55 years, relevant to the research focus.

### Tools

#### *Informed Consent and Socio-Demographic Details*

Participants will provide informed consent before data collection, ensuring voluntary participation. A socio-demographic details sheet will collect information on age, gender, education, occupation, and household income to assess socioeconomic status (SES).

#### *Screening for Socioeconomic Status*

Kuppuswamy Socioeconomic Scale (Radhakrishnan & Nagaraja, 2023): SES will be determined using the Kuppuswamy Socioeconomic Scale, which assigns scores based on the educational level, occupational status, and total family income of the head of the household. The obtained score categorizes individuals into different socioeconomic classes.

#### *Dark Triad Traits*

Short Dark Triad (SD3; Jones & Paulhus, 2014): The SD3 is a 27-item self-report scale measuring Machiavellianism, Narcissism, and Psychopathy on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). The scale has demonstrated strong reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.872) and has been validated using intercorrelation, confirmatory factor analysis, and exploratory factor analysis (Balaji & Balasundaram, 2015)

#### *Well-Being*

Mental Health Continuum – Short Form (MHC-SF; Keyes, 2009): The MHC-SF is a 14-item scale assessing Emotional, Social, and Psychological Well-Being. Emotional Well-Being (Items 1–3) includes aspects like happiness and life satisfaction. Social Well-Being (Items 4–8) and Psychological Well-Being (Items 9–14) represent Eudaimonic Well-Being, assessing self-esteem, social support, and adaptive cognition. Responses are scored on a 6-point frequency scale (0 = Never to 5 = Every day). The MHC-SF demonstrates high internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = 0.87–0.92) and strong validity, showing significant correlations with the WHO-5 for concurrent validity (0.66–0.86), as well as acceptable criterion and discriminant validity (Yeo & Suarez, 2022).

This structured approach ensures robust assessment of SES, Dark Triad traits, and well-being in the study population.

#### *Procedure*

Prior to the data collection each participant was given a brief information about the study. 60 participants (30 from Upper SES and 30 from Lower SES) were recruited through purposive sampling. Upon voluntary participation, the participants gave an informed

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consent. Participants were assured that confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained, and they can withdraw from the study at any phase. Participants SES details were collected by using Kuppuswamy's SES Scale. SD3 scale as well as MHC-SF were duly filled by the participants. Data was obtained online through google forms and some responses were collected in-person by the researcher.

### *Data Analysis*

Jamovi 2.6 was used to carry out all the statistical analyses. The data was tested for Descriptive statistic (Mean, SD), Normality following which appropriate tests for significance were conducted.

### *Ethical considerations*

Participation was voluntary, with informed consent, confidentiality, fairness, and harm reduction ensured throughout, in adherence to the APA Ethics Code for independent research.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The aim of the study was to study the difference between the Lower and Upper Socioeconomic classes in India with respect to the Dark Triad and Well-being.

It was hypothesized that:

- There is no difference between individuals in Upper & Lower socioeconomic class with respect to Narcissism.
- There is no difference between individuals in Upper & Lower socioeconomic class with respect to Psychopathy.
- There is no difference between individuals in Upper & Lower socioeconomic class with respect to Machiavellianism.
- There is no difference between individuals in Upper & Lower socioeconomic class with respect to Well-being.

Data was collected from 60 participants, 30 from Upper socioeconomic class and 30 from Lower socioeconomic class with the age range of 35 to 55 years (Mean=43.0 and SD=5.89), using the Kuppuswamy scale for socioeconomic status, The Short Dark Triad (SD3) and Mental Health Continuum- Short form (MHC-SF). Detailed tables and statistical outputs are presented to showcase in depth data analysis in the following section of this chapter. The results are discussed in association with review of literature and implication of the study along with limitations. Descriptive statistics and test of normality were conducted which later led to use of independent t-test to draw comparison between the scores of the two groups.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of the data collect from Upper Socioeconomic class**

	<b>Machiavellianism</b>	<b>Narcissism</b>	<b>Psychopathy</b>	<b>Hedonic well-being</b>	<b>Eudemonic well-being</b>
<b>N</b>	30	30	30	30	30
<b>Mean</b>	28.5	28.2	20.9	9.07	30.3
<b>Standard deviation</b>	5.14	3.44	5.38	3.36	7.82
<b>Range</b>	27.0	15.0	25.0	11	31

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In Table 1, descriptive statistics for the dimensions of Dark Triad shows mean score of Machiavellianism is 28.5 (SD=5.14), Narcissism has a mean of 28.2 (SD=3.44) and Psychopathy has a mean of 20.9 (SD=5.38). Pertaining to well-being, hedonic well-being has a mean score of 9.07 (SD=3.36) and eudaimonic well-being has a mean score of 30.3 (SD=7.82). The range within the scores shows that the responses vary greatly within the sample as some have got extremely high scores while others got extremely low scores in terms of dark triad traits and well-being. Well-being scores, comparatively, is consistent with less variability.

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of the data collect from Lower Socioeconomic class.**

	<b>Machiavellianism</b>	<b>Narcissism</b>	<b>Psychopathy</b>	<b>Hedonic well-being</b>	<b>Eudemonic well-being</b>
<b>N</b>	30	30	30	30	30
<b>Mean</b>	30.1	27.9	23.0	9.83	33.0
<b>Standard deviation</b>	6.63	3.86	6.46	3.41	9.76
<b>Range</b>	25	15	24	12	38

In Table 2, the descriptive statistics for the dimensions of the Dark Triad show the following mean scores: Machiavellianism has a mean of 30.1 (SD = 6.63), Narcissism has a mean of 27.9 (SD = 3.86), and Psychopathy has a mean of 23.0 (SD = 6.46). Regarding well-being, Hedonic well-being has a mean score of 9.83 (SD = 3.41), and Eudaimonic well-being has a mean score of 33.0 (SD = 9.76). The range within the scores indicates notable variability, with some individuals showing extremely high and low scores across the Dark Triad dimensions and well-being measures. The Hedonic well-being dimension shows relatively less variability in comparison to the other dimensions, while the range for Eudaimonic well-being is particularly broad, suggesting greater variation within that dimension.

**Table 3.1: Showing results of the Shapiro Wilk Test of Normality (Upper socioeconomic class)**

**Group Statistics**

**Shapiro-Wilk**

	<b>Machiavellianism</b>	<b>Narcissism</b>	<b>Psychopathy</b>	<b>Hedonic well-being</b>	<b>Eudemonic well-being</b>
<b>Statistic</b>	0.941	0.933	0.951	0.938	0.982
<b>df</b>	30	30	30	30	30
<b>Sig.</b>	0.100	0.061	0.179	0.082	0.092

**Table 3.2: Showing results of the Shapiro Wilk Test of Normality (Lower socioeconomic class)**

**Shapiro-Wilk**

	<b>Machiavellianism</b>	<b>Narcissism</b>	<b>Psychopathy</b>	<b>Hedonic well-being</b>	<b>Eudemonic well-being</b>
<b>Statistic</b>	0.947	0.968	0.950	0.944	0.963
<b>df</b>	30	30	30	30	30
<b>Sig.</b>	0.136	0.483	0.170	0.119	0.360

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Table 3.1 & 3.2 shows the result of Shapiro Wilk Test on the data set to assess normality of the data distribution for each variable. The values of significance along all the factors are found to be  $>0.05$  indicating a normality of the data distribution for each variable. Hence, parametric test methods can be used to analyse the data further.

**Table 4: Descriptive statistics and results of t test for dimension of Dark Triad.**

	SES	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Significance
<b>Machiavellianism</b>	1	30	28.5	5.14	-1.067	58.0	0.291
	2	30	30.1	6.63			
<b>Narcissism</b>	1	30	28.2	3.44	0.247	58.0	0.806
	2	30	27.9	3.86			
<b>Psychopathy</b>	1	30	20.9	5.38	-1.346	58.0	0.183
	2	30	23.0	6.46			

Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics and results of the t-test for Machiavellianism, Narcissism, and Psychopathy across two different groups based on Socioeconomic Status (SES). To analyze the differences between the scores of these groups, a t-test was conducted.

It can be interpreted from the results that there are no significant differences between the two SES groups (1 = Lower SES, 2 = Higher SES) in terms of the Dark Triad dimensions. The mean score for Machiavellianism in the lower SES group is 28.5, while the higher SES group has a mean score of 30.1, showing a slight difference; however, the difference is not statistically significant ( $t = -1.067, p = 0.291$ ). Similarly, for Narcissism, the lower SES group has a mean score of 28.2, while the higher SES group scores a mean of 27.9, with no significant difference ( $t = 0.247, p = 0.806$ ). Finally, for Psychopathy, the mean score for the lower SES group is 20.9, and for the higher SES group, it is 23.0, again showing no significant difference ( $t = -1.346, p = 0.183$ ).

Hence, the hypothesis stating that “There is no significant difference in the Dark Triad traits between individuals from lower and higher SES” has been accepted. The lack of significant differences in the perceived Machiavellianism, Narcissism, and Psychopathy scores between the two SES groups may suggest that these traits do not significantly vary based on socioeconomic status. It is important to note that the data were collected from a sample that reflects a diverse range of SES backgrounds. Future research could explore additional factors that may contribute to the expression of these traits beyond socioeconomic status.

**Table 5: Descriptive statistics and results of t test for dimension of Well-being**

	SES	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Significance
<b>Hedonic Well-being</b>	1	30	9.07	3.36	-0.876	58.0	0.385
	2	30	9.83	3.41			
<b>Eudemonic Well-being</b>	1	30	30.3	7.82	-1.168	58.0	0.248
	2	30	32.97	9.76			
<b>Emotional Well-being</b>	1	30	9.07	3.36	-0.876	58.0	0.385
	2	30	9.83	3.41			
<b>Social Well-being</b>	1	30	11.33	4.66	-0.132	58.0	0.896
	2	30	11.50	5.14			

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Table 5 presents the descriptive statistics and results of the t-test for various dimensions of well-being (Hedonic, Eudaimonic, Emotional, Social, and psychological well-being) across two different Socioeconomic Status (SES) groups. To analyze the differences between the scores of these groups, a t-test was conducted.

It can be interpreted from the results that there are no significant differences between the two SES groups (1 = Lower SES, 2 = Higher SES) in terms of Hedonic well-being, Emotional well-being, social well-being, and psychological well-being. For Hedonic well-being, the mean score for the lower SES group is 9.07, and for the higher SES group, it is 9.83, showing no significant difference ( $t = -0.876$ ,  $p = 0.38$ ). Similarly, Emotional well-being scores show no significant difference, with the lower SES group scoring a mean of 9.07 and the higher SES group scoring 9.83 ( $t = -0.87$ ,  $p = 0.38$ ). Social well-being also shows no significant difference, with means of 11.33 for the lower SES group and 11.50 for the higher SES group ( $t = -0.13$ ,  $p = 0.89$ ).

For Eudaimonic well-being, the higher SES group ( $M = 32.97$ ) had a significantly higher score than the lower SES group ( $M = 30.3$ ), with a t-value of  $-1.168$  and a insignificant p-value of  $0.24$ . Lastly, for psychological well-being, the lower SES group has a mean score of  $18.97$ , and the higher SES group has a mean of  $21.47$ , with a marginally significant difference ( $t = -1.80$ ,  $p = 0.07$ ).

Therefore, the hypothesis stating that “There is no significant difference in the well-being dimensions between individuals from lower and higher SES” is rejected. The differences in psychological well-being approached significance, which may suggest that further research is needed to explore potential influences of SES on different aspects of well-being.

### DISCUSSION

There is no significant difference in the Dark Triad traits (Machiavellianism, Narcissism, and Psychopathy) between individuals from lower and higher SES. After conducting independent t-tests, no statistically significant differences were found between the SES groups on any of the Dark Triad traits. Hence, the first hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference in the Dark Triad traits based on SES is accepted. A study by Sutin et al. (2013) examined the association between SES and personality traits across adulthood. The findings suggested that while there are associations between SES and certain personality traits, these relationships are complex and not always consistent. This implies that SES does not uniformly influence personality traits across all demographics. Research specifically linking SES to Dark Triad traits is relatively scarce. However, a study by Jonason et al. (2015) explored the relationship between the Dark Triad traits and various life outcomes, including SES indicators. The results indicated that these traits are associated with certain outcomes, but the direct impact of SES on the prevalence or expression of Dark Triad traits was not the primary focus, suggesting a need for more targeted research in this area.

There is no significant difference in the well-being dimensions (Hedonic, Eudaimonic, Emotional, Social, and psychological well-being) between individuals from lower and higher SES. After performing independent t-tests, no significant differences were found for Hedonic, Eudaimonic, Emotional, Social, or psychological well-being between the two SES groups. The relationship between SES and well-being has been extensively studied. While higher SES is often associated with better well-being, some studies have found that this relationship is not always straightforward. For instance, Diener et al. (2010) found that

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income has a modest relationship with subjective well-being, indicating that factors other than SES play significant roles in determining well-being.

### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

This study aimed to explore the differences between the upper and lower socioeconomic classes in relation to Dark Triad traits (Narcissism, Machiavellianism, and Psychopathy) and Well-being. Four null hypotheses were formulated, suggesting no significant differences between the two socioeconomic groups across these variables.

Data was collected from 60 participants—30 from the upper socioeconomic class and 30 from the lower socioeconomic class—using the Kuppaswamy Scale to determine socioeconomic status, the Short Dark Triad (SD3) to assess personality traits, and the Mental Health Continuum-Short Form (MHC-SF) to measure well-being.

The data underwent descriptive statistical analysis and tests of normality, which guided the decision to use an independent t-test for comparing the two groups. The findings are presented through detailed tables and statistical outputs, followed by a discussion integrating previous literature, study implications, and limitations.

#### ***Implications of the Study***

No significant relationship between SES and Dark Triad traits: The study found no statistically significant differences between individuals from lower and higher SES in terms of Machiavellianism, Narcissism, and Psychopathy. This suggests that SES might not be a significant factor in determining these traits, and other variables such as personality, life experiences, and social influences may play a more prominent role in the development of Dark Triad traits.

No significant difference in Eudaimonic well-being based on SES: No significant difference was found in Eudaimonic well-being between individuals from lower and higher SES, with higher SES individuals reporting higher levels of well-being.

#### ***Limitations of the Study***

- Self-Report Bias – Reliance on self-report questionnaires may lead to socially desirable or inaccurate responses, especially for traits like narcissism and psychopathy.
- Cross-Sectional Design – The study captures associations at one point in time and cannot establish causality.
- Urban-Centric Sample – Findings are limited to urban India and may not reflect rural contexts with different social and economic structures.
- Socioeconomic Classification – SES distinctions are complex; income-based categorization may not fully capture lifestyle and social capital variations.
- Western Constructs – Dark Triad traits, developed in Western contexts, may manifest differently in Indian cultural settings, affecting construct validity.
- Narrow Well-Being Focus – Only emotional, psychological, and social well-being were studied, excluding dimensions like physical health, spirituality, and financial security.

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### *Suggestions for Future Research*

- Larger, Diverse Samples – Broader and more representative samples would improve generalizability.
- Mediating Factors – Variables like personality, peer relations, and parenting styles should be explored for deeper insights.
- Mixed-Method Approaches – Combining surveys with interviews or focus groups could capture richer, subjective experiences.
- Wider Geographic Scope – Including participants from varied regions would enhance applicability across different Indian contexts

### **CONCLUSION**

This study explored the relationship between socioeconomic status (SES), Dark Triad traits, and well-being among adults in urban India. The findings indicate that SES does not significantly influence Dark Triad traits, suggesting that these personality characteristics may develop independently of economic and social standing. However, SES does appear to play a role in well-being, particularly in Eudaimonic well-being, where individuals from higher SES reported greater levels of meaning and personal growth. These results highlight the complexity of the relationship between SES, personality, and well-being, emphasizing the need for further research that considers additional psychological and social factors. Future studies with larger, more diverse samples and mixed-method approaches could offer deeper insights into how SES shapes individual experiences and mental health in the Indian context.

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***Conflict of Interest***

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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