



Dilemmas of Adolescents: Dark Triad and Relational Aggression, Moderated by Economic Status

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ARTICLE DETAILS	ABSTRACT
<p>History Revised format: November 2018 Available Online: December 2018</p> <hr/> <p>Keywords Dark triad, Machiavellianism, Narcissism, Psychopathy, Relational Aggression, Adolescents</p> <hr/> <p>JEL Classification: A14, D91</p>	<p>Objective of the present study was to find out the relationship between dark triad and relational aggression among adolescents. A sample of 612 adolescent students with age range 12-19 were selected from different educational institute of Gujrat, Pakistan. Dark triad personality scale short version and the Urdu version of diverse adolescent relational aggression scale were used to measure relational aggression. The findings of the current study revealed significant predictive relation of machiavellianism with relational aggression [R2 = .220; F (1, 607) = 171.340, p<.01], narcissism with relational aggression [R2 =.189; F (1, 607) = 141.753, p<.01] and psychopathy with relational aggression [R2 =.265; F (1, 607) = 218.635, p<.01]. Conclusion: The present study supported the predictive relationship of dark triad with relational aggression. These findings may have implication in the future intervention and prevention procedure for adolescents.</p>

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1. Introduction

Human aggression is a social behavior. According to Baron and Richardson (1994) aggression is any conduct which is aimed at damaging another individual who does not want to be mistreated. Aggression usually appears in different forms such as physical violence which involves hurting others bodily like beating, jolting, shooting, or stabbing; and oral aggression includes hurting others by degrading words (like name calling, yelling, swearing, and screaming). One other form of aggression is relational aggression which is more damaging than physical aggression among adolescence. Relational aggression pertains to deliberately damaging another individual's social relations, inclusion within a group, or feelings of acceptance (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995).

Relational aggression emphasizes on the utilization of one's association to disturb the others relations. Efforts are made to damage the relationships and these relations are also a target for manipulating someone. The culprit exploits his or her links as a basis for attaining power, to gain the social approval, and to distribute violence. Victim's relationships are tried to be managed by these manipulations. Violent conducts possibly would be evident

in real actions both physically or verbally. Different verbal means are used such as disseminating rumors, rolling eyes, overlooking, making faces, exclusion, gossip, and friendship removal (Cheng, 2009). Generally, relational aggression is the basis of psychological and emotive harm that is considered far more damaging as compared to physical harm (Young, Nelson, Hottle, Warburton, & Young, 2011). Moreover, relational aggression does not belong to a specific country or culture but can be observed across cultural restrictions (Bowie, 2007). In all terms, relational aggression damage others by destroying or threats to destroy the relationships by affecting their acceptance in group, friendship, or group insertion.

During the adolescence period social elements become very important. In adolescence era peer group have an impact on ones' evaluation about his or her self. Relational aggression with teenagers is especially significant as they are passing through a transitory period (Siegel, La Greca, & Harrison, 2009). Emotions of anger, jealousy, and envy may be underlying children's wish or need to use social aggression. Recognizing relational aggression in school settings is not very simple as relational aggression is not considered aggression by teachers and parents. Students who are involved in relational aggression deny that nothing has been done by them (Young, Boye, & Nelson, 2006).

Personality denotes to individual variations in distinctive forms of thinking, feeling, and acting. Personality has some bright aspects while others are dark. Three facets are the most prominent in this regard, machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy. Grouping of these three aspects were proposed by Paulhus and Williams (2002) that capture discrete differences in malicious potentials. Further, these personality traits are called the "dark triad." According to them the person's moral judgments "fit" their personality. The judgments which a person put forth match the traits which he or she possesses. The dark triad expresses distinctive associates but share a common core of cold-hearted manipulation (Furnham, Richards, & Paulhus, 2013). Previously, the concepts of dark triad have captured extensive interests, as huge number of pragmatic studies realized their usefulness in forecasting human conduct (Kam & Zhou, 2016).

The first member of dark triad, machiavellianism represents the propensity to abuse others for one's own benefit in a cynical, manipulative, and dishonest relational style (Wilson, Near, & Miller, 1996). People with high intensities of machiavellianism incline to engage in manipulative strategies by implementing tactics that maximize self-benefits (Ryckman, Thornton, & Butler, 1994). Further, machiavellianism are related with a disrespect for the significance of ethics and the practice of untruthfulness to follow and uphold control (Smith & Lilienfeld, 2013). Narcissism, one other notion of dark triad, is marked by magnificence, a sense of being privileged, and an absence of empathy (Smith & Lilienfeld, 2013). Extreme self-exaggeration is the symbol of narcissism, which comprises an overstated view of a person, imaginations of being a controller, sense of achievement and appreciation, and a wish for the endorsement of this self-love believes being reinforced by others (O'Boyle, Forsyth, Banks, & McDaniel, 2012). The third dimension of dark triad is psychopathy which is basically a personality issue that is about lessened remorse, weakened empathy, and significant antisocial conducts (Blair & Viding, 2008; Marsh, 2013). Being impulsive, non-empathetic, self-centered, with marginal emotional responsiveness to hostile stimuli are the key features of people who are high in psychopathy (Jones & Paulhus, 2017; Paulhus & Williams, 2002; Patrick, 1994). Furthermore, psychopathy is an individual's absence of worry for other persons and societal monitoring mechanisms, impulsivity, and an absence of remorse when their activities damage others (O'Boyle et al., 2012).

Personalities with the traits of machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy are in public aversive but still are within the normal range. Prosocial personality traits follow personal growth in the well-liked form as agreeableness and conscientiousness, but antisocial personality qualities achieve individual purpose through the ghastly form (Jonason & Webster, 2010). These three traits are conceptually distinct but empirically are not separated personality variables. Three sets of interconnected tenets are core to the machiavellian personality: an affirmed trust in the efficacy of manipulative strategies in working with other individuals, a pessimistic opinion of human nature, and an ethical viewpoint that places convenience and practicality above code of conduct (O'Boyle et al., 2012).

A study was conducted by Ghim, Choi, Lim, and Lim (2015) to check the causal relations within concealed narcissism, internalized humiliation, annoyance contemplation, and relational aggression. Results depicts that narcissistic anger was directly linked with relational aggression (Onishi, Kawabata, & Yoshida, 2012). Furthermore, research findings revealed that narcissism, and machiavellianism were associated to particular types of infantile aggression. Moreover, narcissistic qualities displayed the strong exceptional relationship with explicit aggression and relational aggression (Lau & Marsee, 2013). Hence, narcissism was directly linked with unconcealed aggression, and relational aggression (Lau, Marsee, Kunimatsu, & Fassnacht, 2011). Additionally, one study

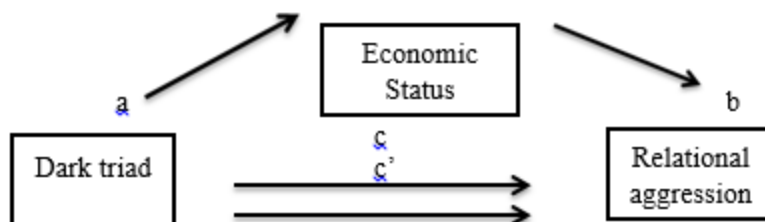
demonstrated that narcissism was positively associated with physical aggression as well as relational aggression (Ojanen, Findley, & Fuller, 2012). Psychopathy, one of the units of dark triad also exhibits a positive link with relational aggression. Psychopathy has a protruding effect on how people justify their deceitful conducts. It was found that the dark triads act as influential psychological precursors to deceptive behaviors. (Harrison, Summers, & Mennecke, 2016). Relationship of psychopathic qualities with violence were also discovered in a research on the sample of grade five to grade nine school children. In addition, these qualities were gauged by both teacher as well as self-report evaluations. Association was found between psychopathic qualities and aggression (Marsee, Silverthorn, & Frick, 2005).

Adolescence is considered a period in which an individual goes through tremendous changes like physical, emotional and psychological. Present research would play a vigorous role to help out the parents and teachers so that they should stress on the development of healthy personality and minimizing the relational aggression consequences.

Narcissism, machiavellianism, and psychopathy predicted relational aggression (Knight, 2016). Besides, a research scrutinized the association amongst relational aggression and psychopathic qualities amongst a sample of confined adolescent females (Marotta, 2016). Economic status of an individuals is an important demographic indicator of different behavioral problems and is long established and well accepted (McGrath & Elgar, 2015). Like it has link with aggression (Tippett & Wolke, 2014).

The material conditions in which individuals develop and live have a long-term influence on their peculiar and social personalities. This influences both the way they think and feel about their social environment and key aspects of their social behavior. Moderated effect of economic status has also been investigated in the present research. Conceptual frame work has been depicted in the following figure

Figure 1: Conceptual framework of current research



2. Method

2.1 Participants

612 adolescent students with age ranges 12 to 19 years were randomly selected from different educational institutes of District Gujrat, Pakistan. Informed consent was assured before data collection. At the end respondent were thanked and acknowledged for their help and cooperation in the study. Besides, permission was also taken from the head of all institutes from where data were collected. Participation was voluntary and confidentially was assured.

2.2 Measures

2.2.1 Dark Triad of Personality (D3-Short)

Dark triad personality scale short version (D3-short), originally constructed by Paulhus (2013) and translated by Gul-E-Sehar and Fatimah (2016) was used to measure dark triad of personality. It is a 5 point Likert type scale with three subscales Machiavellianism, Narcissism and Psychopathy. Each sub-scale comprises of 9 items and total scale comprise of 27 items. Alpha reliabilities for the SD-3 subscales are .71, .77, and .80 for machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy respectively.

2.2.2 The diverse adolescent relational aggression scale

The Urdu version of diverse adolescent relational aggression scale (Riaz, 2014) originally developed by Horton (2010) was used to measure relational aggression. The scale consisted of 27 items to illustrate relational aggression, acts and effects. There is no reversely scored item. All items are worded positively to rate the relational aggression. Responses have been rated on four-point Likert type format ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Scale has a composite score; all the items are totaled for getting a score for relational aggression with high scores showing more relational aggression. Score range of the scale is 27-108. Cronbach's Alpha reliability for the scale is

.78, and the split half reliability is .7.

3. Results

Linear regression was conducted to find out the predictive relationship between Moral disengagement and relational aggression. Results showed that all three members of dark triad are significant predictor of relational aggression.

Table 1: Summary of Linear Regression Analysis of Sub Dimensions of Dark Triad as Predictor of Relational aggression among Adolescent Students (N=612)

Variables	R	R ²	B	SE	β	F	P
Machiavellianism	.469	.220	7.690	.588	.469	171.340	.000
Narcissism	.435	.189	8.450	.710	.435	141.753	.000
Psychopathy	.515	.265	8.445	.571	.515	218.635	.000

Finding of linear regression mentioned in above table revealed that machiavellianism explained the 22% variance in the relational aggression while one-unit increase in machiavellianism will increase score on relational aggression by .469. Narcissism is significant predictor of relational aggression. Narcissism explained the 18.9% variance in the relational aggression while one-unit increase in Narcissism will increase score on relational aggression by .435. Psychopathy is also a significant predictor of relational aggression in adolescent students. Psychopathy explained the 26.5% variance in the relational aggression while one-unit increase in Psychopathy will increase score on relational aggression by .515.

Table 2: Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis of Sub Dimensions of Dark Triad as Predictor of Relational aggression among Adolescent Students (N=612)

Variables	R	R ²	F	P
Machiavellianism, Narcissism, Psychopathy with relational Aggression	.654	.428	151.526	.000

Table 3: Coefficients of Multiple linear regression of Sub dimensions of Dark triad as Predictor of relational aggression in Adolescent Students (N=612)

Variables	Un standardizedCoefficients		StandardizedCoefficients		
	B	SE	β	t	p
Constant	.866	.099		8.756	.000
Machiavellianism	.182	.020	.299	9.123	.000
Narcissism	.176	.024	.244	7.411	.000
Psychopathy	.218	.020	.358	10.918	.000

Finding of multiple linear regression mentioned in above table revealed that Machiavellianism, Narcissisms and Psychopathy are significant predictor of relational aggression in adolescent students. All three collectively account for 42.3% variance in the relational aggression.

Table 4: Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis of Sub Dimensions of Dark Triad as Predictor of Relational Aggression Moderated by Economic Status in Adolescent Students (N=612)

Variables	R	R ²	F	P
Less than 15,000	.751	.564	49.934	.000
15,000 to 30,000	.672	.451	57.607	.000
Above 30,000	.613	.375	52.872	.000

Note: Dependent variable: Relational aggression, Predictors: Machiavellianism, Narcissism, Psychopathy

Results mentioned in table 3 and 4 revealed that economic status has a moderated effect on the relationship of dark triad and relational aggression among adolescent students.

Table 4: Coefficients of Multiple linear regression of Sub dimensions of Dark triad as Predictor of relational aggression moderated by economic status in Adolescent Students (N=612)

Ranges	Variables	Un standardizedCoefficients		StandardizedCoefficients		
		B	SE	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Less than 15,000	Machiavellianism	.269	.042	.415	6.398	.000
	Narcissism	.220	.046	.314	4.805	.000
	Psychopathy	.218	.044	.323	4.983	.000
15,000 to 35,000	Machiavellianism	.129	.033	.214	3.953	.000
	Narcissism	.163	.042	.234	4.070	.000
	Psychopathy	.237	.033	.425	7.253	.000
Above 35,000	Machiavellianism	.204	.032	.329	6.354	.000
	Narcissism	.148	.039	.194	3.827	.000
	Psychopathy	.219	.032	.349	6.949	.000

4. Discussion

Present research found out the association between dark triad and relation aggression among adolescents. Dark triad is a combination of attributes of machiavellianism, narcissism and psychopathy that contain the propensity to pursue respect and unusual handling, to be heartless and indifferent and to regulate others. Dark Triad personalities have an unbalanced opinion of themselves which may depict the violence intrinsic in the dark triad. Dark triad personality traits are highly prevalent among adolescents. Webster and Jonason (2013) document an average score of 36 of college students on the dark triad while anyone scoring above 45 would be viewed as very high on the dark triad. It was hypothesized that machiavellianism would be a significant predictor of relational aggression among adolescents. According to the results of regression analysis machiavellianism explained the 22% variance in the relational aggression [$R = .469$; $F(1, 607) = 171.340$, $p < .01$] while one-unit increase in Machiavellianism will increase score on relational aggression by 7.69.

The reason of this significant finding was that the individual with machiavellian trait are unlikely to take unsafe probabilities as they have a more precise insight of their likelihoods of triumph. So, machiavellians are perhaps less probable to practice explicit violence to attain their objectives, and more probable to utilize indirect and concealed strategies, like relational aggression to acquire what they desire. As mention earlier, machiavellianism is a personality attribute that is categorized by scheming and abusive approach concerning others, absence of sympathy, and a cynical understanding of human nature, representing at least an immoral if not terrific way of operating on others to achieve one's goals (Calhoun, 1969). Machiavellianism preach that one of the primary methods for obtaining and maintaining power is to manipulate others with absolute disregard of emotions and moral principles (Makijaveli as cited in Simić et al. 2015). So, People with strong machiavellian attitudes utilize other individuals as an instrument to attain their personal objectives. Individuals who are high on machiavellianism, score low on conscientiousness as compared to persons with a low machiavellian mind set (Austin, Farrelly, Black, & Moore, 2007). Thus, people with machiavellians attributes are much more target concerned as compared to people-oriented. People high in machiavellian qualities recommend relational tactics that support self-centeredness, dishonesty and operating on others (Jakobwitz & Egan, 2006).

Further, the machiavellian resides high preference on money, authority, and rivalry (Stewart & Stewart, 2006). Due to self-centered behavior, extra concern for obtaining goals and less empathetic attitudes towards others machiavellians adolescents involved in relational aggression. A study findings supported the current research outcomes that machiavellianism showed positive association with relational aggression among youngsters (Kerig & Stellwagen, 2010). The reason of this positive association, may be that adolescence is an age of personality development, during this era teenager compare themselves with their peers, wants to be liked and be powerful, and for attaining desired aims they adapt some negative behaviors which leads to negative outcomes like relational aggression. An evolving line of investigation has been dedicated to the inspection of both positive and negative consequences of relational aggression. In this line a varied array of current researches directs that relational aggression is associated with a multitude of undesirable progressive outcomes (Card, Stucky, Sawalani, & Little, 2008). Furthermore, there is a study which talked about the association between machiavellianism and indirect

aggression (Knight, 2016). While other research has endorsed the notion that there is a direct relationship between machiavellianism and relational aggression (Pursoo, 2013). But one study conducted by Matt and Krawczyk (2017) has little bit different findings. According to them machiavellianism, did not have a significant impact on cyberbullying behavior.

Narcissism, the second member of dark triad, is also a significant predictor of relational aggression among adolescents. Narcissism explained the 18.9% variance in the relational aggression. Tracey and Robbins (2003) claim that they protect themselves against the sentiments of feeling inferior and disgrace by making external attributions for their letdowns, which leads to the sentiments of aggression and annoyance towards other persons. In the same line, Morf and Rhodewalt (2001) have stated that while the egotistical sense of personality is clearly exaggerated, which is also highly susceptible to unwanted conducts. Individuals with narcissism are continually worried and strive to uphold their exaggerated self-assurance by a range of personal and social tactics. Furthermore, narcissism is regarded as a detachment between an insentient sense of inadequacy and a conscious sensation of supremacy. Furthermore, narcissists are by means extremely self-centered people. They're so principally absorbed on their individual wishes and worries that they give little consideration to the distresses of others.

As mentioned earlier, in adolescence period relationally aggressive behaviors is very common. Relational bullying includes an inequity of control, in which a student or a group of students oppresses another student who is incapable to efficiently protect him/herself (Raskauskas&Stoltz, 2004). The undesirable deeds that are combined in relational aggression can be verbal or nonverbal, and displayed openly or indirectly, and comprise of harmful intimate and social associations to upset one another. These deeds can comprise of wicked conversation, social segregation (Werner & Nixon, 2005) and can be one in which relational intimidation happens. Further in this age, formations of self and a solid purpose to hold self-esteem are pertinent to narcissism. Current study emphases on narcissism as a personality attribute on which persons in the common population differ (Raskin& Terry, 1988). Though, one investigation revealed that it is likely to consistently and meaningfully measure "normal narcissism" in children and teenagers (Thomaes, Bushman, Stegge, Olthof, 2008). Undeniably, a study has exposed that narcissists involve in diverse self-control policies to be able to retain their exaggerated self-opinion (Morf&Rhodewalt, 2001).

Early adolescents are conscious about themselves and their behavior is directed by a numberless behavioral standard, and their self-views are extremely dependent on other's attitudes (Harter, 2006; Reimer, 1996; Rosenberg, 1965). Zimmer-Gembeck, Trevaskis, Nesdale, & Downey (2014) stated that indirect violence touches the heights in the period of late childhood and teenage years, owing to the developmental signs (i.e., the growth of higher oral abilities, social consciousness) practiced in this age.

Findings of the present research are consistence with preceding researches. Research findings revealed that narcissism was positively linked with relational aggression through domination goals for both genders, in youngsters (Ojanen, Findley & Fuller, 2012; Ghim, Choi, Lim, & Lim, 2015). In the same line another study conducted in japan on adolescent students revealed that narcissistic rage is positively associated with relational aggression (Onishi, Kawabata, Kurokawa& Yoshida, 2012). Furthermore, it has been revealed by other researchers that narcissism was directly associated with overt aggression, and relational aggression. (Lau & Marsee, 2013; Lau, Marsee, Kunitatsu, & Fassnacht, 2011). In nutshell, narcissists are highly driven to endure their individual and others insights of themselves as greater beings. They exhibit self-promotion and are disposed to imagine about infinite capability and control. (Hook, 200).

The third dimension of dark triad, psychopathy, is also found to be a significant predictor of relational aggression in adolescent students. Psychopathy explained the 26.5% variance in the relational aggression [$R = .515$; $F(1, 607) = 218.635$, $p < .01$]. According to Cleckley (1988), psychopathy as having both personality and behavioral characteristics that may include artificial appeal, superficial feelings, absence of empathy and regret, proneness to boredom, failure to prevent problematic behavior, and persistent desecration of social standards. In addition, insensitivity and coldness are considered a crucial feature of psychopathy (Frick & Hare, 2001). Another characteristic of psychopathy which is important with reference to adolescent that it has been shown to be fairly stable across teenage period in terms of constancy and level of felonious conduct (Lynam, Miller, Vachon, Loeber, & Stouthamer-Loeber, 2009).

Psychopathy is a severe personality disorder that first revealed itself early in life and continues during most of the lifetime. Most clinicians and investigators agree that psychopathy is related to a collection of emotional, relational,

and behavioral features, vital to which are a profound absence of regret or guilt and a cold-hearted neglect for the feelings, rights, and prosperity of others (Cleckley, 1988; Hare, 1996). Individuals with this condition are typically described as impulsive, self-centered, deceiving, sensation-seeking, and irresponsible. Given these characteristics, it is not astonishing that psychopaths commit a disproportionate amount of severe repetitive misconduct, violence and often come into interaction with the criminal justice system. Findings of previous researches are in line with the results of the present study that psychopathy is significant predictors of relational aggression. (Holdship, 2015; Coyne, Nelson, Graham-Kevan, Keister, & David, 2010). Furthermore, a study on females endorse the positive relationship between relational aggression and psychopathic traits (Marotta, 2016). According to Czar, Dahlen, Bullock and Nicholson (2011) psychopathic traits are predictive of relational aggression. Further, specific personality traits inherent in psychopathy can help predict frequency of relational aggression (Holdship, 2012). In the same line a study conducted on Canadian teenagers longitudinally revealed that psychopathy predicted bullying throughout adolescence (Free, 2017).

According to the findings of present study economic status has a moderating effect on the relationship of dark triad and relational aggression (see table 3,4). Previous researched endorse this notion. Like a research supported the idea that economic status and economic activity have a part in determining the personality traits (Yang, & Lester, 2016). Another study supported the notion that socioeconomic status has impact on the adolescent aggression (Shameem, & Hamid, 2014).

In nutshell, machiavellianism, narcissism and psychopathy were found to be significant predictor of relation aggression in adolescents. Economic status has a moderating effect on the relationship of dark triad and relational aggression. The variance explained by them ranges from 18.9%-26.5%. psychopathy is found to be explaining more variance in relational aggression among adolescents as compared to the other two members of dark triad. Narcissism and machiavellianism were differently related with demonstrations of hostility amongst youngsters. Psychopathy was steadily linked to all types of aggression, however machiavellianism only foretold relational aggression (Paulhus, Curtis, & Jones, 2017). Finding of the present study revealed that dark triad is a significant determinant of undesirable behavior of relational aggression moderated by economic status of individuals so there is need to address these personality aspects of adolescents to lessen such negative behaviors. Information is worth implication for parents, educationists and counselors as well.

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