Investigating the Dark Triad in Relation to Career Choices, Job Satisfaction and Career Suitability

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate the dark triad in relation to career choices, job satisfaction and career suitability. The study utilised a quantitative cross sectional design, using an anonymous online questionnaire comprised of; the Dark Triad of Personality (D3-Short) measurement (Paulhus, 2013), Holland Code (RIASEC) test (Holland, 1985) and the Overall Job Satisfaction survey (Taylor & Bowers, 1972), which was administered to participants via email and social media sites. The results indicated a significantly higher level of Narcissism within the Leadership group, a significantly higher level of Machiavellianism in the Competitive group and a significantly higher level of Psychopathy in the Authority & Power group. Furthermore, there was no relationship found between Career Suitability and Job Satisfaction. However, additional analysis revealed a significant relationship between Machiavellianism and Realistic, Investigative and Social career sectors. Results and implications of the findings are discussed within.
Introduction

HR professionals and Organisational Psychologists have often pondered what makes people choose certain careers. This is also something individuals consider themselves when looking to make a career change. Tokar, Fischer and Subich (1998) reported that personality is one of the key factors behind career choice. In particular, a group of personality traits, known as the dark triad has generated a lot of interest amongst researchers. For instance, Jones and Figueredo (2013, p. 521) found that “The Dark Triad consists of three overlapping but distinct personality variables: narcissism, machiavellianism and psychopathy.”

According to Jonason, Wee, Li and Jackson (2014, p. 119), different personalities tend to be attracted to certain types of careers and away from others. This begs the question, what kind of careers attract those who score high in the dark triad? The following will provide an overview of the Dark Triad and will examine Narcissism, Machiavellianism and Psychopathy separately in order to determine if each trait impacts career choices, job satisfaction and career suitability.

Narcissism

According to Ritter et al. (2011), Narcissism personality disorder (NPD) is characterized by a lack of empathy as well as a pattern of grandiosity and overwhelming need for admiration. Watson, Grisham, Trotter and Biderman (1984) argued that everyone displays narcissistic behaviours from time to time, however this does not simply qualify them for a diagnosis of Narcissistic personality disorder. According to the American Psychiatric Association (2013), an individual must have five of the nine criterions listed in the DSM manual in order to be diagnosed with NPD. While narcissism appears to be a negative trait, Maccoby (2000) reported that it can actually be very useful to the workplace. In fact, research by McNeal (2003) found that the spectrum of narcissism is on a continuum and it just depends where the individual scores on that spectrum, that determines what type of narcissist
they are. For instance, Maccoby (2000) found that there are healthy levels of narcissism in which people are capable of compromising, inspiring and leading others. Maccoby (2000, p. 68) further argued that these types of narcissists are known as “productive narcissists” because they are not afraid to take risks and they get the job done. On the other end of the continuum, there is the “unproductive narcissist” (Maccoby, 2000, p. 68) who is less empathetic, unwilling to compromise, attention seeking, callous and extremely difficult to be around in general.

Campbell and Campbell (2009) explained that although narcissists lack empathy and have very few close relationships, they will seek social contact with other people as a means of gaining admiration and attention. Morf and Rhodewalt (2001, p. 178) previously argued that in order to attain this, narcissists must rely on external sources for affirmation because they are unable to regulate their own self-esteem. For instance, a recent experiment tested participants with NPD and found that “In each study, narcissists performed better when self-enhancement opportunity was high rather than low.” (Wallace & Baumeister, 2002, p. 819).

Therefore, it seems reasonable to suggest that narcissists are driven by a “need for power and admiration” (Neider & Schriesheim, 2010, p. 29) and not by an empathetic concern for the people around them (Vecchio, 2007, p. 89-90). The next section will discuss potential careers which a narcissist may be attracted to and will offer evidence to show why this is the case.

**Career Choices for the Narcissist**

According to Rosenthal and Pittinsky (2006, p. 624), “narcissism is positively linked to attaining a leadership position”. While researching the pro’s and con’s of narcissism in leadership roles, Maccoby (2000, p. 69) stated that narcissists “are the innovators, driven in business to gain power and glory”. Therefore, to maintain a certain image, they must choose a career, which feeds their demand “to be admired, not loved”. (Maccoby, 2000, p. 70).
Positions such as CEO’s and CFO’s are good examples as these types of careers “encourage ego-boosting behaviour” (Boyle, Carpenter & Hermanson, 2012, p. 63). Another study by Westerman, Bergman, Bergman and Daly (2011) compared business to psychology students and found that the business students displayed higher levels of narcissism than psychology students. These findings suggest that narcissists are highly attracted to the business and management sector. In addition, research by Twenge and Foster (2008) previously found that there was a significant increase in narcissism amongst business students over a five-year period. The research also concluded that while they couldn’t be sure what caused these changes, the results show that the rate of narcissism has grown rapidly over the generations. Westerman et al. (2011) later supported this research as it also found that narcissism is still growing amongst business majors today and doesn’t seem to be declining. Furthermore, Westerman et al. (2011) expressed concerns about why business schools seem to be attracting more and more narcissistic students. The research questioned if schools are encouraging students to embrace their inner narcissistic traits. Westerman et al. (2011, p. 23) concluded that if colleges are encouraging this, “it will likely have a significant impact on businesses, the economy, and our environment.”

This is already evident as Boyle et al. (2012) found that while investigating accounting fraud, leadership positions such as CEO’s and CFO’s were found to possess higher levels of narcissism. Researchers argue that this is due to their risk-taking attitude and over confidence, which can ultimately “impair an organization’s morale and performance” (Lubit, 2002, p. 127). Interestingly, other occupations such as politicians (Hill & Yousey, 1998) and celebrities (Young & Pinsky, 2006), have all been reported as common career choices for the narcissist.

Despite the negative side, narcissism can actually be an advantage to candidates with this type of personality. Research has found that narcissistic candidates applying for jobs tend
to create a better first impression (Back, Schmukle & Egloff, 2010), therefore having a greater advantage over other candidates. Harms, Spain and Hannah (2011) explains that their success is due to the fact that interviews occur over a short period of time, therefore not allowing the darker personality traits to reveal themselves. However, Paulhus (1998) argues that due to their arrogance and overbearing manner, this success is short lived and they tend to decline in their work performance over time. Consequently, the current research will examine career suitability in relation to narcissism, and will also assess suitability and how satisfied the participant is in their current role.

Machiavellianism

Machiavellianism has been described as “manipulating others for personal gain, often against the other’s self-interest.” (Wilson, Near & Miller, 1996, p. 285). Everyone is capable of manipulation to a certain extent. In fact, earlier research has argued that it is a valuable trait for human survival and that “natural selection favours individuals who successfully manipulate the behaviour of other individuals” (Dawkins & Krebs, 1978, p. 309).

This is further supported by Gavrilets and Vose (2006, p. 16823), who investigated the dynamics of Machiavellianism and discovered that it is an evolved intelligence and it was, and continues to be, a vital strategy for achieving “higher social and reproductive success”. This is especially evident in today’s working society as there has been plenty of research to support the fact that Machiavellianism can adversely affect workplace relationships. (Jones & Kavanagh, 1996; Kiazad, Restubog, Zagenczyk, Kiewitz & Tang, 2010; Kessler et al., 2010; Jonason, Slomski & Partyka, 2012). For instance, Wastell and Booth (2003) outlined that Machiavellians have an inability to connect with others emotionally and because of this, they treat people as objects or as a means to an end.

This combined with their strong tendency to abuse subordinates (Kiazad et al., 2010) and their use of manipulative strategies (Kessler et al., 2010) makes them masters at
maintaining power in the workplace. Interestingly, Jonason et al. (2012, p. 449) reported that those who score high in Machiavellianism also use “soft tactics” in which they forge an alliance with their colleagues so that they can pass off their work to others. The same research concluded that the Machiavellian will create workplace friendships through “ingratiation, exchange of favors, and joking” (Jonason et al., 2012, p. 449). Unaware that they are being exploited, the target believes they are carrying out a favour for the friend as they are blinded by the illusion of this fake camaraderie. (Jonason et al., 2012).

As nasty as this trait sounds, there are some positive sides to this personality. Gardner and Avolio (1995) found that Machiavellians are multifaceted and have the ability to adapt to any situation. For example, they are able to portray an image of confidence and will appear calm under pressure, even during stressful situations where they are unsure of the outcome. According to Christie and Geis (1970), they are not distracted by other factors and once they set out to achieve a goal, which suits their own interests, there is no stopping them. This can be highly advantageous to an organisation as this drive sets them apart from other leaders.

**Career Choices for the Machiavellian**

Machiavellians are likely to choose careers which, “provide access to extensive resources and means of controlling others.” (Dahling, Whitaker & Levy, 2008, p. 223).

Examples of such careers include business careers, management, law, sales, and marketing. (Corzine, 1997; Fehr & Samsom, 2013). As the Machiavellian is highly concerned with social influence (Jonason & Webster, 2012), they are also more likely to choose a career that offers status, such as enterprising jobs. (Jonason et al., 2014). Previous research has also found that people who scored higher in machiavellianism are more focused on winning and therefore they are better off working in business careers where competition is highly valued. (Fehr et al., 2013). In particular, sales is an excellent career choice for the Machiavellian as they are described as charming, exploitative (Wilson et al., 1996) and
highly manipulative (Christie et al., 1970). The Machiavellian also displays lower empathy (Barnett & Thompson, 1985), which makes it easier to reap the benefits at the expense of other people. (Jonason, Li, Webster & Schmitt, 2009).

Another career choice for the Machiavellian is the role of a politician. Appelbaum and Hughes (1998), argued that people in public office need to appear as though they have high morals, yet to succeed they sometimes have to use questionable methods. For instance, Ferris, Fedor and King (1994) examined Machiavellians in a political environment and found that these types of roles allow the individual to use influential tactics, which in turn helps them make important connections, therefore giving them more job security. This supports the view that machiavellians use “soft tactics” (Jonason et al., 2012, p. 449) and that they have the ability to adapt to any situation. (Gardner et al., 1995).

Despite all the negative implications towards Machiavellianism, research has found that individuals who score high in this trait are more likely to be chosen as leaders since they are very effective at manipulating others. (Gemmill & Heisler, 1972). Therefore, based on the evidence provided, the current research will investigate Machiavellianism in more detail by examining the types of careers participants are employed in, taking into consideration how suitable the job is for their personality and whether or not they are satisfied in their current role.
Psychopathy

According to Paulhus and Williams (2002, p. 557), Psychopathy is characterised by “high impulsivity and thrill-seeking along with low empathy and anxiety.” Psychopaths have also been described as callous, manipulative and extremely exploitative. (Hodson, Hogg and MacInnis, 2009). Previous research has found that psychopaths differ from psychotic individuals in that they do not suffer with delusions or hallucinations and they are completely aware of what they are doing. (Hare, 1995). In general, the public tends to view psychopaths as murderers or sexual offenders who are locked away. However, according to Hare (1995), the majority of psychopaths live amongst the general population. According to Blair, Mitchell and Blair (2005), approximately 1 out of every 100 adult males and 1 in every 200 females are psychopaths. In fact, previous research also reported that there are at least two million psychopaths in North America alone and 100,000 of them are based in New York City. (Hare, 1995). Furthermore, “Most, if not all, people have come across a psychopath at some stage in their lives.” (Blair et al., 2005, p. 31).

Interestingly, psychopaths experience emotion differently to other people. For instance, Borkovec (1970) carried out an experiment where psychopaths were repeatedly exposed to a sound, which was immediately followed by an electric shock. The results found that the psychopaths displayed lower levels of fear in comparison to non-psychopaths.

Borkovec (1970) concluded that this was an important finding because fear usually motivates people not to do certain things. However, in the case of the psychopath, the results highlighted their inability to feel certain emotions such as anger, sadness, excitement or fear. Research has even found that psychopaths have “reduced basal reactivity” (Quay, 1977, p. 371), therefore they require more stimulation than the average person in order to feel anything. Quay (1977) explains that this is why psychopaths get their pleasure from inflicting pain and suffering on other people. They need to carry out extreme actions in order to feel...
anything. However, despite these findings, Widom (1977) argues that certain psychopathic traits may be an advantage to the individual, particularly in the workplace, if they refrain from serious antisocial behaviour. For instance, Cheang and Appelbaum (2015, p. 169) reported that “milder” psychopaths are able to keep up a consistent normal appearance in comparison to the more extreme psychopaths. As they are a milder form of psychopath, their maladaptive behaviours are sometimes mistaken as a sign of strength. (Cheang et al., 2015).

So what types of careers are psychopaths attracted to? Dutton (2012) argued that psychopaths are attracted to any situation where there is a power structure and the ability to manipulate or control other people. Interestingly, Lykken (1982) found that certain occupations are more like hobbies than actual work for the psychopath and this is because there is something within that job that feeds them what they need. The next section will provide a few examples of careers that would potentially suit the psychopathic personality.

**Careers for the Psychopath**

Dutton (2012) proposed that society needs psychopathy whether they realise it or not. As previously discussed, there is a misconception amongst the public that psychopaths are just criminals and murderers. However, Dutton (2012) argues that the psychopathic traits, such as charm, confidence, ruthlessness and coolness under pressure can actually be a good thing, provided they are in the right doses. The study reported that just because the psychopath has the trait of boldness, this does not mean they will end up as killers. Infact, it can actually lead to heroic acts. For instance, Dutton (2012) found that the psychopath has the ideal personality to become a surgeon or a bomb disposal expert. This is because the psychopath is impulsive (Hart & Dempster, 1997) and has less fear response than other people. (Quay, 1977). The theory that a psychopath can be heroic was previously supported by Lykken (1995, p. 29) who wrote that the “hero and the psychopath may be twigs off the same genetic branch.” Other research by Furnham (2007) argued that the callousness of the
psychopath may also be beneficial in a policing or military role, such as special forces.

Ironically, Dutton (2012) also found that some psychopaths are actually working as prison guards locking up other people. Therefore, based on the research, it is fair to say that not all psychopaths end up as criminals, a lot of them are actually quite successful. For instance, Furnham (2007) found that the allure of this personality often lands the psychopath senior management positions. This is because the selector does not “recognize in the biography of the individual all the crucial indicators of the disorder.” (Furnham, 2007, p. 23).

However, McCall (1998) argues that this type of personality is like a false advertisement and eventually the individual will be discovered after some time. According to Babiak and Hare (2006), psychopaths also have the ability to read people and are very adaptable, allowing them to change their personalities in order to suit the situation.

Wilson (2010) argues that skills such as these makes it easier for the psychopath to exploit others as they are more focused on achievement and less empathetic. Babiak et al. (2006) found that while psychopaths appear to have a good verbal fluency, they actually lack in social, communication and education skills when interacting with other people. Therefore, a business career would not be considered suitable for the psychopath. However, Boddy (2006) argues that despite this, there are alarming numbers of psychopaths in the business world and this is because they are attracted to power and money. In fact, Boddy (2006) found that psychopaths are responsible for many incidents of accounting fraud within larger organisations. This is especially evident in banking and stock markets as DeCovny (2012) reported that approximately ten percent of people who work on Wall Street are psychopaths.

This is not really surprising as psychopaths are renowned for lying, fabrication and manipulation. (Decovny, 2012). Another career that could potentially suit the psychopath’s personality is in health and safety. While this might seem like an odd match, Furnham (2007, p. 24) argues that because the psychopath has “obsessional checking behaviours”, this could
be utilised in a health and safety environment.

Despite being separate constructs, all three personalities share “a socially malevolent character” (Paulhus & Williams, 2002, p. 557) and studies have provided further evidence that there are overlaps between these traits, such as self promotion, emotional coldness and aggressiveness. (Fehr & Samsom, 2013). Therefore, it is possible that some of these personalities will overlap in the career sectors.

**Rationale**

The objective of this research is to establish a link between the dark triad traits and occupational choices. Studies on the dark triad in relation to career choices are still relatively underdeveloped and while some research exists on the impact of the dark triad in the workplace, such as toxic employee’s etc, the impact each trait has on occupational choice has yet to be examined in an Irish context. Therefore, it is hoped that this piece of research can contribute to this area in more detail and provide Organizational Psychologists, HR associates and other professionals in the recruitment field with information that will better equip them to select suitable candidates.

The present research aims to explore whether people with dark triad traits are more likely to choose specific careers over all other occupations, and will also take into consideration the participant’s suitability to the job and how satisfied they are in their current role.
Hypotheses

H1: There will be significantly higher levels of Narcissism in leadership roles compared to those in other careers.

H2: There will be significantly higher levels of Machiavellianism in competitive roles compared to those in other careers.

H3: There will be significantly higher levels of psychopathy in positions of authority and power in comparison to other careers.

H4: Participants employed in careers which are suitable for their personality, will have higher job satisfaction than others.
Method

Participants
The sample comprised of 177 online participants (89 females and 88 males) from various jobs (e.g., sales, marketing, management, police force, army, healthcare, law, etc). The inclusion criteria required participants to be 18 or older, therefore the participants who took part were aged between 18 and 74. Convenience and Snowball sampling was utilised in this study and all participants completed the same questionnaire. The questionnaires were sent via email and social media sites, such as Facebook, Linkedin and Google Psychology forums. Participation was completely voluntary and no incentives were offered at any stage.

As the study was anonymous, there was no way to report the geographical location of the participants. However, the study was open to all nationalities.

Design
The design of this research project was a Quantitative Cross sectional study as it aimed to look at the comparisons between groups. A mixture of convenience and snowball sampling was used and this type of sampling was useful to the current study as it provided fast and easy access to participants online. By using social media and email, the questionnaires (Appendix B, C & D) were shared with many people from different occupations, therefore providing a larger sample size for this study. Comparisons in relation to the dark triad and career suitability will be examined as well as job satisfaction. The correlational aspect will examine whether there are any further relationships between the dark triad traits and other variables. The independent variables being measured are Narcissism, Machiavellianism, Psychopathy and suitability and the dependent variables are job satisfaction and occupation.
Materials

All participants completed three short online questionnaires containing the Dark Triad of Personality (D3-Short) Measurement (Paulhus, 2013), Holland Code (RIASEC) test (Holland, 1985) and Overall Job Satisfaction (Taylor and Bowers, 1972). Demographic questions were constructed at the beginning of the questionnaire concerning gender, age and current occupation.

The dark triad traits were assessed using the Dark Triad of Personality (D3-Short) measurement (Paulhus, 2013), which measures Machiavellianism, Narcissism and Psychopathy. This scale consists of three subscales, each with nine items to determine whether participants have engaged in Machiavellian, Narcissistic or Psychopathic behaviour.

This 27-item scale is scored using a 5-point response format (1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree). According to Baughman, Dearing, Giammarco and Vernon (2012), all three subscale’s of the D3-Short measurement have good internal consistency, with a Cronbach alpha coefficient reported of .73 for Machiavellianism, .71 for Narcissism and .78 for Psychopathy. In the current study, the Cronbach alpha coefficient was .81 for Machiavellianism, .77 for Narcissism and .71 for Psychopathy. Furthermore, the Cronbach alpha for all three traits combined was .78, all of which are highly reliable.

Career suitability was measured using the Holland Code (RIASEC) test (Holland, 1985), which consists of 42 statements and is scored using a 2-point response format (0 = No; 1 = Yes). This measure assesses which careers are suitable based on the participant’s interest’s and then categorises them under one of the following six career sectors: Realistic (agriculture, mechanic, food and hospitality, etc), Investigative (Engineering, Psychology, Medicine, Police), Artistic (Fine and Performing Arts, Photography, Architecture, Interior design), Social (Counseling, Nursing, Education), Enterprising (Marketing, Sales, Business Management, Banking, Finance) and Conventional (Insurance, Administration, Data
processing, Court reporting). Ryan, Tracey and Rounds (1996) utilised this measure in a
previous study and reported that the Cronbach alpha coefficient for the six sectors were as
follows: .89 for Realistic, .92 for Investigative, .91 for Artistic, .86 for Social, .83 for
Enterprising and .91 for Conventional. Ryan et al. (1996) concluded that the RIASEC model
is therefore a highly reliable scale. In the present study, the Cronbach alpha coefficient was
.76 for Realistic, .79 for Investigative, .77 for Artistic, .70 for Social, .73 for Enterprising and
.70 for Conventional. The Cronbach alpha coefficient for all subscales combined was .85, all
of which are highly reliable.

Job satisfaction was measured using the Overall Job Satisfaction survey (Taylor and
Bowers, 1972). This measure consists of 7 statements such as ‘All in all, how satisfied are
you with your job?’. The scale is scored using a 5-point response format (1 = Strongly
Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree), which determines the respondents’ feelings towards their
current job. The scoring format differs from other scales, as higher scores indicate a higher
dissatisfaction rather than the other way around. Norizan (2012) previously reported that the
internal consistency for this scale, as measured by Cronbach’s Alpha was .84. Norizan (2012)
concluded that based on this figure, the measure is internally consistent. In the current study,
the Cronbach alpha coefficient was .81 for Overall Job Satisfaction. Therefore, this is a
highly reliable measure. The data was then entered into IBM SPSS Statistics 22 and analysed.

Procedure

Firstly, a research proposal and a research ethics review application form were
submitted to Dublin Business School Board of Ethics for approval, which was successfully
obtained. All three questionnaires (Appendix B, C & D) were approved by the appointed
supervisor prior to release. Once approval was granted, a link to the questionnaires were sent
out to participants via facebook, linkedin, reddit, psychology forums and email. When
participants clicked on the link, they were greeted with an information sheet (Appendix A)
which outlined the following; the researcher was completing the final year of a BA (Hons) Psychology in Dublin Business School, the purpose of the study, that the results gathered would be submitted as part of a final year project to Dublin Business School, participation in the study was entirely voluntary and that responses were confidential. Participants were also made aware that once they submitted the survey, it is not possible to withdraw from the study and responses cannot be attributed to any one participant as the answers are anonymous. It was also explained that all data from the questionnaires would be stored electronically on a password protected computer. The researcher’s contact details were given along with the supervisors details. At the very bottom of the information sheet, there was a separate section which outlined the consent form. Participants were made aware that they must be 18 or older to take part in the study and that by preceding to the next page, they were consenting to take part in the study.

Once participants clicked onto the next page, they were required to fill out some demographic questions, such as sex, age and current job title (Appendix A). These questions were mandatory and the participant was unable to proceed to the next stage unless all three questions were answered. A debrief sheet (Appendix E) was attached to the end of the questionnaires thanking them for their participation and outlining contact information for a number of different organisations offering various supports to those affected by any of the questions asked. Upon completion of the questionnaire, which took on average between 10-15 minutes, the questionnaires were electronically saved and stored in Survey Monkey until the desired number of responses were reached. The data was then exported from Survey Monkey to carry out further analysis. There was no pilot study performed prior to going live as the questionnaires were straightforward with no complications.
Ethical Considerations

As the study only involved adults, a statutory declaration was not required. Participants were assured on the information sheet that all data collected would remain anonymous and for this reason, they would be unable to withdraw from the study once they submitted the questionnaire as it would not be identifiable. The data was securely stored on a password protected computer and hard drive. Dublin Business School Code of Ethics was strictly adhered to at all times and the PSI Code of Ethics was also consulted.
Results

Data Analysis

The data was entered into IBM SPSS Statistics 22 and statistically analysed. Checks were conducted and it was ascertained that the data was not normally distributed, however parametric tests were still conducted as past research has reported that these tests are robust enough in nature to “withstand assumption violations”. (Cleveland, 2013, p. 1).

Demographic Data

Of the 177 participants that completed this study, 49.7% were male (N=88) and 50.3% were females (N=89) from an online survey (N=177). The age ranges were as follows: 7.3% were aged between 18-24 (N=13), 50.8% were aged between 25-34 (N=90), 24.3% were aged between 35-44 (N=43), 11.3% were aged between 45-54 (N=20), 5.1% were aged between 55-64 (N=9) and 1.1% were aged between 65-74 (N=2). As there were many different occupations, they were grouped according to career sectors. The highest percentage of careers was in the Other sector (29.9%) while the lowest percentage of careers fell under the Competitive sector (17.5%). See Table 1.

Table 1 Career Sectors Frequency

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<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>23.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitive</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authority &amp; Power</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>29.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive Statistical analysis was conducted on all variables in order to ascertain the mean, median, standard deviation and minimum and maximum scores.

Of the three dark triad traits examined, Machiavellianism (M = 3.10, SD = .73) was the highest reported score followed by Narcissism (M = 2.80, SD = .70) and Psychopathy (M = 2.16, SD = .56). Surprisingly, there was no significant relationship found between career suitability and job satisfaction (M = 1.84, SD = .72). See Table 2.

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics of Narcissism, Machiavellianism, Psychopathy, Job Satisfaction and Career Suitability Types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Narcissism</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>4.89</td>
<td>.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Machiavellianism</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>4.56</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychopathy</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Satisfaction</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realistic</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>2.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigative</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>2.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artistic</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>1.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>1.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enterprising</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>1.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventional</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>1.90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Inferential Statistics

There will be significantly higher levels of Narcissism in leadership roles compared to those in other careers.

A one-way analysis of variance showed that the levels of narcissism differed significantly between the four career sectors (F (3,156) = 10.82, p < .001). More specifically, Tukey HSD post hoc analyses highlighted that the leadership group (M = 3.21, SD = .80)
displayed significantly higher levels of narcissism over the authority and power group (M = 2.44, SD = .55, p < .001), and the other group (M = 2.79, SD = .60, p = .022) but not the competitive group (M= 2.88, SD = .61). Therefore, based on these findings the null hypothesis can be rejected. See Figure 1.

![Figure 1: Levels of Narcissism in Career Sectors](image)

**Figure 1 Levels of Narcissism in Career Sectors**

There will be significantly higher levels of Machiavellianism in competitive roles compared to those in other careers.

A one-way analysis of variance showed that the levels of Machiavellianism differed significantly between the four career sectors (F (3,157) = 7.50, p < .001). More specifically,
Tukey HSD post hoc analyses highlighted that the competitive group ($M = 3.51$, $SD = .80$) displayed significantly higher levels of Machiavellianism over the authority and power group ($M = 2.78$, $SD = .72$, $p < .001$), but not the leadership group ($M = 3.19$, $SD = .66$) or the other group ($MD = 3.10$, $SD = .57$). Therefore, based on these findings the null hypothesis can be rejected. See Figure 2.

Figure 2 *Levels of Machiavellianism in Career Sectors*

There will be significantly higher levels of Psychopathy in positions of authority and power compared to those in other careers.
A one-way analysis of variance showed that the levels of Psychopathy differed significantly between the four career sectors (F (3,155) = 4.56, p = .004). More specifically, Tukey HSD post hoc analyses highlighted that the positions of authority and power group (M = 2.38, SD = .54) displayed significantly higher levels of Psychopathy over the leadership group (M = 2.07, SD = .54, p = .033), the competitive group (M = 1.96, SD = .59, p = .006) but not the other group (M = 2.11, SD = .51). Therefore, based on these findings the null hypothesis can be rejected. See Figure 3.

![Figure 3](Levels of Psychopathy in Career Sectors)

Participants employed in careers which are suitable for their personality, will have higher job satisfaction than others.
An independent samples t-test found that there was no significant difference between job satisfaction in the yes group (M = 1.83, SD = .65) and the no group (M = 1.95, SD = .93) (t(44.44) = .72, p = .476, CI (95%) -.22 -> .46). Therefore, the null hypothesis can be accepted.

Additional Analysis

Additional analysis was conducted to examine whether other variables may be correlated. See Table 3.

Table 3 Correlation table of Narcissism, Psychopathy, Machiavellianism, Job Satisfaction and Career Suitability Types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Narcissism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Psychopathy</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Mach</td>
<td>.343**</td>
<td>.126</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Job Sat</td>
<td>.019</td>
<td>.062</td>
<td>-.061</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Realistic</td>
<td>-.050</td>
<td>.032</td>
<td>-.245**</td>
<td>.147</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Investigative</td>
<td>.124</td>
<td>.032</td>
<td>-.160*</td>
<td>.016</td>
<td>.670**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Artistic</td>
<td>.039</td>
<td>-.041</td>
<td>-.101</td>
<td>.027</td>
<td>.551**</td>
<td>.532**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Social</td>
<td>-.129</td>
<td>.010</td>
<td>-.429**</td>
<td>.069</td>
<td>.608**</td>
<td>.524**</td>
<td>.450**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Enterprising</td>
<td>.438**</td>
<td>.021</td>
<td>.211**</td>
<td>-.015</td>
<td>-.103</td>
<td>-.072</td>
<td>-.160*</td>
<td>-.040</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Conventional</td>
<td>-.023</td>
<td>-.031</td>
<td>-.035</td>
<td>-.033</td>
<td>.187*</td>
<td>.153</td>
<td>.137</td>
<td>.256**</td>
<td>-.075</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Pearson correlation coefficient found that Machiavellianism appears to be a significant predictor of Realistic jobs (r (158) = -.25, p = .002). This relationship can account for 6.25% of variation of scores.

The Pearson correlation coefficient also found that Machiavellianism is a significant predictor of Investigative jobs (r (158) = -.16, p = .043). This relationship can account for 2.56% of variation of scores.
Finally, the Pearson correlation coefficient also reported a moderate negative significant relationship between Machiavellianism (M = 3.10, SD = .73) and Social jobs (M = 4.23, SD = 1.96) (r(158) = -.43, p < .001). This relationship can account for 18.49% of variance of scores.
Discussion

The objective of this research was to try and understand the types of jobs that might appeal to those who score high in Narcissism, Machiavellianism and Psychopathy. The research also examined career suitability and how satisfied the participant is in their current job. Although a great deal of research exists on the dark triad in general, investigation of these traits into career choices are comparatively underdeveloped. While research has been conducted in other countries, such as the UK (Furnham, Hyde & Trickey, 2014) and the USA & Canada (Jonason et al., 2014), there is no such research available in Ireland and therefore, analysis on the dark triad across all occupations have yet to be conducted in an Irish context. Understanding these traits in relation to the types of careers they are attracted to would enable HR professionals and Organisational Psychologists in a number of ways.

For instance, Jonason et al. (2012) found that toxic employee’s who scored higher in the dark triad were more likely to use soft tactics in the workplace. However, despite these findings, Jonason et al. (2012) proposed that more research needs to be done in understanding how these employees end up in such positions in the first place and what makes them so successful. Perhaps if there is more research available on the types of careers these personalities are attracted to, it will give researchers a base level to work from and help them to understand what makes narcissists, machiavellians and psychopaths so successful.

O’Boyle, Forsyth, Banks and McDaniel (2012) further argues that at present, there is not enough research on the dark triad and there are still many questions about the role of these traits in the workplace.

In this study, Machiavellianism ($M = 3.10, SD = .73$) was the highest reported score, followed by Narcissism ($M = 2.80, SD = .70$) and Psychopathy ($M = 2.16, SD = .56$). This is a considerable increase on the study conducted by Jonason et al. (2012), in which the mean overall average was 3.03 for Machiavellianism, 2.70 for Narcissism and 2.05 for
Psychopathy. Considering the sample size for the current study was much smaller than that study, these findings suggest that the dark triad traits may be just as prevalent in Ireland as they are in other parts of the world. Further research would need to be conducted to examine this further. There was a significant relationship found between high levels of Narcissism and Leadership careers. While there was also a significant relationship found between Machiavellianism and Competitive roles, additional analysis revealed that Machiavellians are suited to Realistic, Investigative and Social careers as well. As predicted, a significant relationship was also found between Psychopathy and positions of Authority & Power. An examination into the relationship between Career Suitability and Job Satisfaction yielded insignificant results.

**Narcissism and Leadership Careers**

It was hypothesised that there will be significantly higher levels of Narcissism in leadership roles in comparison to those in other careers. A one-way analysis of variance identified a significant relationship between Narcissism and leadership roles. Although post hoc analysis highlighted that the leadership group displayed significantly higher levels of narcissism over the authority and power group and the other group, the leadership group did not display significantly higher levels over the competitive group.

This is in keeping with previous research, as per Rosenthal et al. (2006), who found that higher levels of narcissism are associated with attaining a leadership position. As per the previous research, the hypothesis that higher levels of narcissism would be found in leadership roles was supported in this instance.
**Machiavellianism and Competitive Careers**

The second hypothesis predicted that there would be significantly higher levels of Machiavellianism in competitive roles compared to other careers. A one-way analysis of variance found that Machiavellianism differed significantly between the four career sectors. In particular, post hoc analysis highlighted that while the competitive group displayed significantly higher levels of Machiavellianism over the authority and power group, they did not display significantly higher levels of Machiavellianism over the leadership group or the other group.

While the significance of this result matches in with past research (Corzine, 1997; Fehr et al., 2013), it is surprising that the competitive group did not display significantly higher levels of Machiavellianism over the leadership and other groups. Furthermore, it is even more surprising in the case of the other group as this sector consisted of nurses, carers, IT specialists, a photographer, administrators, accountants, engineers, credit risk analysts, etc.

Overall, while the Machiavellianism scores were quite close between the competitive, leadership and other groups, the competitive group still fared higher than the other three groups. Therefore, based on these findings, the hypothesis that higher levels of Machiavellianism would be found in Competitive roles was supported in this instance.

**Psychopathy and Positions of Authority & Power**

It was predicted that there would be higher levels of Psychopathy in positions of Authority & Power. A one-way analysis of variance identified a significant relationship between Psychopathy and positions of authority and power. Post hoc analysis also conveyed that positions of power and authority displayed significantly higher levels of psychopathy over the leadership group and competitive group, but not the other group. This is comparative to previous research by Furnham (2007) who proposed that because psychopaths are callous and impulsive, they would ideally be suited to positions such as special forces in the military.
or policing. Dutton (2012) later argued that psychopaths also have the ideal personality to become a surgeon or a bomb disposal expert. Therefore, based on these findings, the hypothesis that higher levels of psychopathy would be found in positions of Authority & Power was supported in this instance.

**Career Suitability and Job Satisfaction**

The final hypothesis predicted that there would be a significant relationship between career suitability and job satisfaction. An independent samples t-test found that there was no significant relationship between the two variables. This was a surprising result as there is numerous research to support the theory that people who are in the right career for their personality, tend to be more satisfied than others. (Judge, Higgins, Thoresen & Barrick, 1999; Holland, 1996; Gellatly, Paunonen, Meyer, Jackson & Goffin, 1991). However, this insignificance may be due to other factors. For instance, perhaps the participants who are in the correct career for their personality are satisfied with the actual job itself but not with the working conditions, their colleagues, the workload, etc.

Another possible explanation for the insignificant result is that perhaps some of the participants were afraid to answer the job satisfaction part of the survey. While analysing the data, there were a few questions left unanswered, particularly in the case of the guards. Even though the questionnaires were anonymous, it is not surprising that people in these types of professions may not be comfortable with answering job satisfaction surveys, especially considering recent controversies around whistleblowers within the Garda Siochana. (Clifford, 2014). Interestingly, earlier research by Conway and Walsh (2011) had examined the Morris Tribunal, which investigated gross misconduct and corruption within the guards. Conway et al. (2011, p. 9) reported that there is a “blue wall of silence” within the police system in Ireland and that many guards are reluctant to speak up. As there were quite a few guards gathered in the sample, this may very well have influenced the results.
Additional Analysis

Additional analysis was also conducted to examine whether the dark triad may be correlated with other variables. A Pearson’s correlation coefficient found that Machiavellianism also falls under the Realistic category (mechanical or athletic jobs), the Investigative category (science careers, engineering, policing, army, medicine, psychology, etc) and the Social category (Counseling, Nursing, Physical Therapy, Advertising, Education, etc) (Holland, 1985). These findings contradicts previous research, which established that Machiavellians would be more suited to careers such as law, sales and marketing as they are competitive people who enjoy controlling and manipulating others. (Dahling et al., 2008; Corzine, 1997; Fehr et al., 2013). Even more surprising was the relationship between Machiavellianism and the Social category as the Pearson correlation reported a variance of 18.49%, a much higher variance than the realistic category (6.25%) and the Investigative (2.56%). Recent research has argued that Machiavellians are only interested in winning (Fehr et al., 2013) and status (Jonason et al., 2014), so it is interesting that there is a correlation between Machiavellianism and social careers, which consists mainly of caring professions.

However, as all three traits of the dark triad share certain behaviour tendencies, such as self-promotion, emotional coldness and aggressiveness (Fehr et al., 2013), it was always a possibility that some of these personalities would overlap in the career sectors. These are areas that need further analysis to establish the nature of their relationship and the significance of it and may prove worthy of future studies.

Limitations

A number of strengths and weaknesses were observed in this study. One of the major strengths was the relatively large sample size of 177 participants, thereby providing more representative results. In particular, there was also a good balance between gender as 49.7% of participants were males and 50.3% were females. As the study was anonymous and open
to all nationalities, there is no way to know how many of the participants were actually based in Ireland. Therefore, the research may not be representative of an all Ireland sample.

Another limitation was that the RIASEC test only provided a few examples of careers under each category (Realistic, Investigative, etc), therefore it was in some cases, unclear which categories applied to certain jobs. For instance, one could argue that a guard could potentially fall under both the Investigative and Social categories because both of these involve helping people and solving problems. As previously mentioned, there were a few questions unanswered in the job satisfaction section. If the participants had answered all the questions, this may have yielded a more significant result for the fourth hypothesis.

However, three out of the four hypotheses in this study were proven to be significant and have been reinforced by previous research, which adds merit to these findings.

Furthermore, the measures used in this study were found to be highly reliable which suggests that the results are more likely to be accurate.

**Future Research**

This study has identified a number of potential avenues for future research, some of which have already been discussed. The results of this study have in particular highlighted the need for further analysis on the dark triad in relation to occupational choices within an Irish context. While the current study did gather enough participants to test each of the hypotheses, it failed to gather other professions that were previously discussed in the introduction section of this study. For instance, health and safety workers, surgeons, actors, politicians, etc. Therefore, if replicating this study in the future, it would be better to gather a wider range of occupations so that further comparisons can be made. All three traits of the dark triad have been shown to have overlapping characteristics, which are not fully understood yet. (Paulhus et al., 2002). However, if researchers can understand the different facets of each trait and the types of careers they are suited to, this would enable HR
professionals and Organisational Psychologists in occupational settings, such as candidate selection and recognising toxic employees.

**Conclusion**

In order to obtain a greater understanding of the dark triad in relation to career choices, this study examined Narcissism, Machiavellianism and Psychopathy separately against different occupations, while taking into account career suitability and job satisfaction. Results of the analysis revealed a significant relationship between Narcissism and Leadership, a significant relationship between Machiavellianism and Competitive roles and a significant relationship between Psychopathy and positions of Authority and Power. However, there was no significant relationship found between career suitability and job satisfaction. A significant correlation was also observed between Machiavellianism and the Realistic, Investigative and Social categories. It is very important to understand the role of the dark triad traits in the workplace. However, in order to do this, there needs to be a platform from which other researchers can build upon. It is hoped that the current study has offered that platform so that future research will continue to investigate this area.


Boyle, D. M., Carpenter, B. W., & Hermanson, D. (2012). CEOs, CFOs, and Accounting Fraud.


Neider, L. L., & Schriesheim, C. (Eds.). (2010). The" dark" side of management. IAP.


Wilson, P. (2010). Why psychopaths like Dexter aren't really all that bad.

Appendix A

Information Sheet

Investigating the Dark Triad in Relation to Career Choices, Job Satisfaction and Career Suitability

My name is Michelle Kijak and I am conducting research in the Department of Psychology, which will be exploring the Dark triad in relation to Career Choices, Job Satisfaction and Career Suitability. This research is being conducted as part of my final year project and will be submitted for examination.

You are invited to take part in this study and participation involves completing and returning the attached anonymous survey. While the survey asks some questions which may cause some minor negative feelings, it has been used widely in research.

Participation is completely voluntary, therefore you are not obliged to take part. Please note, as your answers are anonymous and confidential, responses can not be attributed to any one participant. For this reason, it will not be possible to withdraw from participation after the questionnaire has been submitted.

If you feel affected by any of the questions asked in this survey, please be aware that there will be contact information for support services available on the final page.

The information gathered will be securely stored and data from the questionnaires will be transferred from the paper record to electronic format and stored securely on a password protected computer.

If you require further information about the research, please feel free to contact me by email.

My supervisor, Pauline Hyland can also be contacted at:
Consent form

I have read and understood the attached information leaflet regarding this study.

I understand that this an anonymous study and once I submit the questionnaires, I will be unable to withdraw from the study.

You must be 18 or over to take part in this study.

By preceding to the next page, you are consenting to take part.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.
Demographics

1. Sex

2. What is your age?
   - 18 to 24
   - 25 to 34
   - 35 to 44
   - 45 to 54
   - 55 to 64
   - 65 to 74
   - 75 or older

3. What is your occupation / job title?

   [Blank field]
Appendix B

Dark Triad of Personality (D3-Short) Questionnaire

SD3.1.1 – 27 items

*Please rate your agreement or disagreement with each item using the following guidelines.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Neither Agree nor Disagree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Machiavellianism subscale**

1. It’s not wise to tell your secrets.
2. I like to use clever manipulation to get my way.
3. Whatever it takes, you must get the important people on your side.
4. Avoid direct conflict with others because they may be useful in the future.
5. It’s wise to keep track of information that you can use against people later.
6. You should wait for the right time to get back at people.
7. There are things you should hide from other people because they don’t need to know.
8. Make sure your plans benefit you, not others.
9. Most people can be manipulated.

**Narcissism subscale**

1. People see me as a natural leader.
2. I hate being the center of attention.
3. Many group activities tend to be dull without me.
4. I know that I am special because everyone keeps telling me so.
5. I like to get acquainted with important people.
6. I feel embarrassed if someone compliments me.
7. I have been compared to famous people.
8. I am an average person.
9. I insist on getting the respect I deserve.

Psychopathy

1. I like to get revenge on authorities.
2. I avoid dangerous situations.
3. Payback needs to be quick and nasty.
4. People often say I’m out of control.
5. It’s true that I can be mean to others.
6. People who mess with me always regret it.
7. I have never gotten into trouble with the law.
8. I enjoy having sex with people I hardly know
9. I’ll say anything to get what I want.
Appendix C

Holland’s RIASEC Model (1959) Questionnaire
Appendix D

Overall Job Satisfaction Questionnaire

As this survey is under copyright, a copy cannot be included.
Appendix E

Thank you for taking part in this survey. If you feel affected by any of the questions asked, the following support services are available:

**Aware**
Ph: 01 661 7211
Email: info@aware.ie

**Concern**
Ph: 01 417 7700
Email: [https://www.concern.net/contact](https://www.concern.net/contact)

**Pieta House**
Ph: 01 628 2111
Email: info@pieta.ie
[http://www.pieta.ie/contact-us?gclid=CIS8lrv0vckCFQqdGwodwNAHAQ](http://www.pieta.ie/contact-us?gclid=CIS8lrv0vckCFQqdGwodwNAHAQ)

Alternatively, if you have any concerns or questions about the study, please feel free to contact me directly by email: 1732971@mydbs.ie.

Thank you,

Michelle Kijak