

# Shining Light on the Dark: Exploring the Associations Between the Dark Triad Traits and (Un)Ethical Behaviour via Self-Presentation Concerns

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## Introduction

**Problem:** Self-Interested Unethical Workplace Behaviour  
E.g., expense fraud, time theft, misuse of company resources.

Dark Triad traits (Narcissism, Psychopathy, Machiavellianism) are associated with negative behaviours which can be damaging for organizations Furnham et al. (2013).



How do the 3 Dark Triad traits *separately* predict (un)ethical behaviour and what are the underlying mechanisms?

### Shared Characteristics:

- Selfishness
- Disagreeableness
- Dishonesty
- Deficiencies in Empathy
- Tendencies to exploit others

Paulhus & Williams (2002)

## Literature Review

- People generally seek to present themselves as ethical to gain social acceptance Aquino & Reed (2002), Leary, (1995).
- Narcissism, Machiavellianism, and Psychopathy are likely to be differentially associated with **self-presentation concerns** Muris et al. (2017).

## Conceptual Models

### Narcissism

- Those high in Narcissism want others to perceive them favourably, as they view themselves Harrison et al. (2018).



### Machiavellianism

- Those high in Machiavellianism have a strategic motivation to deceive others for self-gain Harrison et al. (2018).



### Psychopathy

- Those high in Psychopathy have difficulty taking perspectives of others and less receptive to social concerns Hart et al. (2018).



## Preliminary Results

Table 1  
Pearson's Correlations of Dark Triad and Self-Presentation

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. Machiavellianism	-			
2. Psychopathy	.598**	-		
3. Narcissism	.546**	.458**	-	
4. Self-Presentation	.141†	.044	.314**	-

Notes.

\*\* $p < .01$ .

† $p < .10$ .

$N = 144$

*Self-Presentation Scale* Yun et al. (2017)

Sample Items: Scale (1) Strongly Disagree, (5) Strongly Agree.

1. I would like to present myself to others as being a friendly and polite person.
2. I am sensitive to the impression about me that others have.

## Methodology/ Next Steps

### Cross-Sectional Correlational Study

- Measure Narcissism, Machiavellianism, Psychopathy Jonason & Webster (2010)
  - Sample Items: *Scale (1) Strongly Disagree, (5) Strongly Agree* (“I want others to pay attention to me”; “I tend to manipulate others to get my way”; “I tend to lack remorse”).
- Measure Self-Presentation Concern Yun et al. (2017)
- Self-Report measure of Self-Interested Unethical Workplace Behaviour Mitchell et al. (2018)
  - Sample Items: *Scale (1) Never, (5) Always* (“made up work activity to look better”; “came in late and didn’t report it”; “lied about the reason you were absent”).

### Experimental Behavioural Outcome Task:

- Manipulate *Visibility of Behaviour*
- 2 Conditions: (Visible Behaviour vs. Anonymous)
- Behavioural outcome task (e.g., bargaining task, anagram task) Gneezy (2005), Willemuth (2010)

## Intended Contributions

Understanding the nuances between traits and (un)ethical behaviour is important for advancing Dark Triad and behavioural ethics literatures.

To answer the calls for more research into how to reduce (un)ethical behaviour in organizations.

Inform the development of targeted interventions to reduce unethical workplace behaviour commonly associated with the Dark Triad.

De Cremer & Moore (2020)