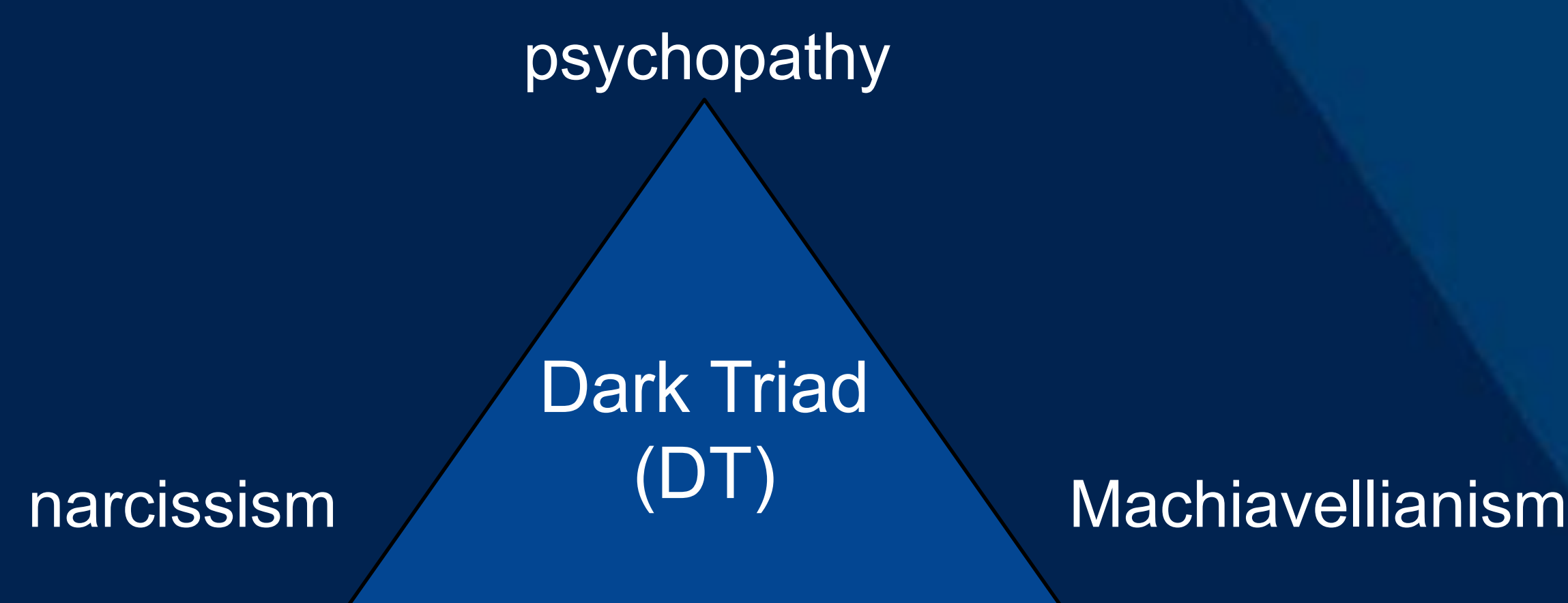


Introduction

The Dark Triad (DT) refers to psychopathy, Machiavellianism, and narcissism as personality traits for individuals. These personality traits are often characterized by callousness, manipulation, and impulsivity (Jonason & Webster, 2010). Additionally, egotistical behaviors and a distinct lack of empathy are also characteristic of these personality types.



Intrusive thoughts are negative ruminations typically based on a specific theme, like contamination, and are often part of anxiety disorders. Intrusive thoughts are commonly dark, violent, or outside of social norms, which can further the anxiety disorders they are characteristic of.

Previous studies have examined links between early childhood and the development of dark personalities, as well as rumination frequencies in offenders (Edlund et al., 2023; Evans et al., 2007; Szabo et al., 2022).

Given the nature of both personalities on the Dark Triad and intrusive thoughts, it was hypothesized that individuals who scored higher in dark personality traits would experience intrusive thoughts at a higher rate. The present study has a primary focus on psychopathy scores, as it was theorized that psychopathic personalities would have a higher rate of intrusive thoughts, especially those themed around callousness and violence.

Method

The following study consisted of undergraduate students (N=53) from West Virginia University Institute of Technology. Gender demographics were split almost evenly between males (43.4%) and females (54.7%). Only one (1) (1.9%) participant self-identified as non-binary/third gender. Participants aged from 17 to 22, with a mean age of 18.65 (SD=0.978). Participants were asked a series of questions regarding their frequencies in risky behavior (i.e., explicit drug/alcohol use, drinking and driving, or sexual promiscuity). Participants were also asked to report if they had ever experienced a traumatic event and to report the length of time that had passed from the traumatic event. All demographic questions were based on previous research.

Method

In addition to demographic questions, participants were asked to complete two surveys; The Dirty Dozen (DD) (Jonason & Webster, 2010) and the Obsessional Intrusions Inventory (OII) (Purdon & Clark, 1993).

The DD asks a series of twenty-two questions measured on a five-point Likert scale, where each set of questions within the survey is related to either Machiavellianism, narcissism, or psychopathy. Twelve of these twenty-two questions are validated, and the overall values correlated to these twelve questions are then z-scored where the three main categories are averaged to get a composite Dark Triad score (Jonason & Webster, 2010).

The OII is a series of fifty-two questions that measure the frequency of intrusive thoughts. Questions vary by intrusive thought themes, such as contamination, varying degrees of immoral behavior, and acts of self-harm. A mean average of all fifty-two questions was taken to determine an overall frequency of negative intrusive thoughts.

The scores for each survey of each participant were examined and calculated using SPSS data analysis software. DD scores were compared to OII scores as part of the hypothesized correlation. As previously mentioned, this study primarily focused on the psychopathic personality traits an individual may have, but each aspect of the triad was studied for correlations with negative intrusive thoughts.

Discussion

The hypothesis that individuals who scored higher in dark personality traits would have an increased frequency of intrusive thoughts was supported.

Overall, those with psychopathic and Machiavellian personalities seem to experience the most intrusive thoughts. This may be due to the overall darker nature of these personalities. Machiavellian personalities scored the highest in intrusive thought frequencies, which may be caused by the characteristic resource-based mindset concerning other individuals. Narcissism scored the lowest for intrusive thought frequencies, which was predicted by previous research.

There were several limitations within this research including but not limited to; sample subjects (college students) and sample population.

There are several further expansions to consider regarding this research. Examining similar personality and negative intrusions and ruminations in both violent and non-violent adult criminals seems to be the most beneficial to this type of research. Additionally, the Dark Triad is sometimes referred to as the Dark Tetrad and includes sadism as a personality type. Seeing how sadism can play into these other personalities and intrusion frequencies would be beneficial. The final expansion to this research would be to examine dark personalities and negative intrusions related to intimacy and how that impacts intimate partnerships.

Results

There were no correlations between demographic variables.

However, there was a strong positive correlation between psychopathy and higher frequencies of intrusive thoughts, $r(51)=.335, p<.05$. Post-hoc analyses found that greater Machiavellianism was associated with more intrusive thoughts, $r(51)=.560, p<.001$. Narcissism was unrelated to intrusive thought frequencies, $r(51)=.152, n.s$.

Correlations					
		Psychopathy	IntrusiveThoughts	Machiavellianism	Narcissism
Psychopathy	Pearson Correlation	1	.335*	.595**	.414**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.014	<.001	.002
	N	53	53	53	53
IntrusiveThoughts	Pearson Correlation	.335*	1	.560**	.152
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.014		<.001	.277
	N	53	53	53	53
Machiavellianism	Pearson Correlation	.595**	.560**	1	.430**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001		.001
	N	53	53	53	53
Narcissism	Pearson Correlation	.414**	.152	.430**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.277	.001	
	N	53	53	53	53

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

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

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