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Investigating the Role of Mental Strength and Self-Conscious Emotions in Predicting Dark Triad Personality Traits of Addicted Persons

Sharmen shamsi*

MA, Department of Clinical Psychology, Sanandaj Branch, Islamic Azad University, Kurdistan, Iran.

*Corresponding Author

Email: golishamsO@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This research was conducted with the aim of investigating the role of mental strength and conscious emotions in predicting dark triad personality traits in drug addicts using descriptive-correlation study methods. The statistical population in this research included all men with drug addiction admitted to drug addiction rehabilitation centers in Marivan city, who had received services in these centers in the first 3 months of 1401, which were 200 people and by sampling method available were selected as the sample size. The data collection tools included Clough's Mental Strength Questionnaire (1998), Grant et al's self-conscious emotions scale (2002), and Johnson et al's (2010) dark triangle personality questionnaire. Multivariate regression analysis and Pearson correlation were used to analyze the research data. The results indicated that there is a relationship between mental strength and self-conscious emotions with dark personality traits; This means that 44% of the variance of the dark personality traits was explained by the variables of mental strength and self-conscious emotions.

Keywords: *mental strength, self-conscious emotions, dark personality traits, dependent on drugs*

INTRODUCTION

Addiction is a chronic disease characterized by drug seeking and use that is compulsive, or difficult to control, despite harmful and serious consequences. Drug use becomes chronic and even abstinence in many people. After extended periods, abstinence would be very valuable and diverse (1). According to the studies conducted, 500,000 young people per day get drug addicted in the country, the number of drug addicts doubles every ten years, and the average age of substance use initiation is under 15 years old. Some of them use the drug again after stopping taking the drug which affects the community varieties considerably through increasing the damages (2).

The results reveal that most of the people with drug abuse had mental and personality disorders before food consumption that appear in destructive form and get more inappropriate, but some people use drugs. Rather, the drug is actually consumed and it reveals the mutual relationship between characters and consumers (3); therefore, in visual factors and the cases of drug abuse personalities, mental power, and other traits are considered important characteristics related to the drug consumption (4) and, meanwhile, dark personality traits is an attractive fundamental

formula proposed in two recent decades in the field of personality pathology models. Dark personality traits are socially undesirable and disturbing traits and are related to very large and major problems for people. This model includes three specific traits of narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism known as three dark personality traits (5). Narcissism refers to a tendency to perceive the self as superior and grandiose and entails a sense of self-obsession. Psychopathy is a negative component characterized by impulsivity, excitement, and interpersonal aggression. And Machiavellianism is a kind of sociability and interpersonal to overcome selfishness that involves interpersonal strategies that advocate self-interest, deception, and manipulation (6). Shreds of evidence show that dark traits are associated with common behaviors such as using the internet and drug abuse (7, 8, & 9).

Whereas the individual's mind and mental images are his/her psychological reactions to the surrounding environment and these reactions present versions of the individual to people and society, these triad personality traits are of special importance across a range of achievement context that entails mental strength (10) and mental strength is one of the psychological constructs that has attracted the researchers' attention to explain the differences in people's performance (11), but this construct is one of the most widely used concepts in the field of psychology. Psychological competence can be expressed in a few sentences as follows: salient people have a series of psychological and personality traits that make them suffer from the most severe stress, preserve themselves and nothing can break them down. Therefore, mental toughness is a set of personality traits that serve as a source of resistance and a protective spray against stressful life events, and it does so as a general orientation toward oneself and the outside world and includes three components of control, control, and combat (8).

From Kobasa's viewpoint (11), a person with psychological hardiness has three general characteristics: A: the belief that one can be influential over events experienced in life (control); B. Experiencing emotions concerning or towards the activities that cause one to have (commitment); and C. predicting the change is an exciting challenge for further growth and is considered a natural aspect of life (challenge) (12). Further, the manner these factors make a profound impact on the characteristics of the triad dark traits is significant since people can behave in different ways, and being different is one of the negative and annoying characteristics to deal with and fight against the future and the fields of character formation, so it seems that there exists a correlation between the mental strength and trial dark traits (13).

In addition to mental strength, the reason for the emergence of emotions in people with different personalities and orientations causes various tendencies one of the forms of emotions in people is self-conscious emotions, and these self-conscious emotions are abilities that a person experiences from the inside (14). These emotions are special feelings that help the individual in the environment of social life through recognition and communication, contextualization, and decision-making. However, since emotions are consciously controlled and the wise person corrects his/herself and understands negative mistakes and, on the other hand, can distinguish dark traits from negative and unpleasant ones in any other way, and consider the personal character flaw concerning others, and therefore it is expected that a relationship exists between these two psychological characteristics. In other words, the triad traits should be appropriately developed in the individuals by the increase of self-conscious emotions (15). In this respect,



Schimmenti et al. (14) showed that self-awareness has a significant relationship with the triad of dark traits.

Ghobadi and Taklavi (2017) investigated the role of mental toughness and insomnia symptoms in predicting dark personality traits of women with multiple sclerosis. The results showed that there is a positive correlation between insomnia symptoms and dark traits. Further, there exists a negative and significant correlation between conscious emotions and all three traits. Moreover, the regression results showed that mental toughness of insomnia symptoms precedes dark traits in women with MS (21).

Barati (2019) investigated in research the mediating role of mental toughness in the dark personality and professional characteristics of nurses. The results were indicative of real conceptual expression to investigate the mediating role of the psychological strength of dark personality traits with job burnout. Further, the significant and very profound direct effect of the dark narcissistic personality on burnout was revealed. In addition, it was also found that mental toughness has a significant and profound direct effect on burnout. Moreover, dark traits, namely, narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism naturally have a significant and considerable effect on burnout through psychological force (22).

Bagheri Sheykhangafshe and Kafi Masuleh (2018) compared the dark personality traits, cognitive decision-making, and mental toughness in natural, supplemented, and steroid bodybuilders. The results of the multivariate analysis revealed a significant difference between the dark personality traits, decision-making, and mental toughness of the three groups. Accordingly, the results of the S.L. test showed that steroid addicts reveal more personality traits and less mental strength in comparison to normal addicts (24).

Mozafarizadeh and Tayyebi (2018) investigated the significant and profound effect of triad dark traits on the happiness and mental toughness of athletes and non-athletes. The findings show that narcissism has a significant and profound effect on the happiness of accidental and non-accidental athletes as well as non-athletes. However, this trait had a profound inverse impact on the happiness of unfit athletes, and its effect on accidental and unfit athletes was not significant. On the other hand, the happiness of all the groups has a significant and positive profound effect on three components of truth and control, observation, and challenge (26).

Rezvani and Hashemian (2016) studied the structural model of three features of personality traits, mental toughness, and aggression in adolescents. The correlation results showed that antisocial Machiavellianism (through mental toughness) has a significant and profound indirect impact on adolescents' aggression. Further, narcissism has a significant profound direct effect on their aggression. Moreover, psychopathy and Machiavellianism have a significant profound indirect impact on adolescents' aggression (27).

Haroonrashidi and Sharifinia (2020) studied the relationship between dark personality traits and emotional expressiveness with life satisfaction in army employees. The findings showed that there is a significant negative relationship between the components of dark personality traits. Further, there exists a significant relationship between intense emotional life and life satisfaction that the results of compensatory data and dark traits explain 31% of life satisfaction (28).

Coakley et al. (2020) examined the role of three dark personality traits: intolerance of uncertainty, passion, and experience in predicting high-risk sexual behaviors of delinquent adolescent offenders. The results show that there is a relationship between the dark triad of personality (Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy), tolerance of uncertainty,



empirical emotional experience, and risky sexual behavior in delinquent adolescents. Moreover, the results showed that excitement, psychopathy, intolerance of uncertainty, respectively, and risky sexual relationships are observable among delinquent adolescents.

Malehmir (2019) compared the dark trilogy of personalities in addicted and non-addicted men. The findings reveal that the scores in both groups of addicts were higher than those of non-addicts. However, significant differences were observed between the two groups only in the case of dark photos. Therefore, drug-addicted men experience more anxious thoughts and dark personality traits (30).

In their research, Sindermann et al. (2018) investigated the role of the dark triad of personality and thrill-seeking in the high-risk behaviors of young people. According to the obtained results, it can be concluded that people are more prone to high-risk behaviors such as fraud, bullying, abuse of personal relationships, deception and Fraud, financial crimes, immorality and violation of laws, academic fraud and theft, and lying. Accordingly, psychopathy entails the traits such as interpersonal relations, illegal behavior, inappropriate submission to others, and suicide. Furthermore, sadistic people have characteristics Such as a lack of trust, lack of empathy, dishonesty, and antisocial tendencies (7).

Many patients believed that there is nothing wrong with taking the drug once, while most of the addicted patients did not intend to get addicted from the beginning and all of them try it once out of curiosity and then take it, which is very naive that we think. They stated that we do this because our intention of using drugs is only to help the sense of curiosity and we should not experience the pleasant and tempting feeling caused by it. Later, this feeling causes addiction and dependence (21) and, accordingly, since personality factors and methods of diagnosing the disease are known and, on the one hand, it helps to diagnose and, as a result, apply the best treatment, and since the individual's characteristics include all of them, it has a significant and profound effect on life, the forgiveness and many of the daily behaviors of a person is the outcome of the individual's environment and personality traits, which is very necessary in this case (20). The present research aims to answer the question of whether there is a relationship between dark triad traits with mental strength and conscious emotions in addicted persons.

The results of this research can be a tool to be regarded in the application of appropriate treatment methods and cognitive-behavioral interferences as part of drug treatments, training and correction of destructive personality traits and strengthening mental abilities and self-conscious emotions, and in sick people, decrease in drug use and, finally, reduction of social damage is necessary to be clarified in the researches. It is hoped that this research can take a step to investigate these issues.

Research method

The present research has a descriptive-correlational design. The statistical population included all addicted men who were admitted to substance abuse treatment clinics of Marivan City, who had received services in these clinics during the spring season of 2022. The statistical sample included 200 people who were selected by the census. The criteria for the samples' inclusion were as follows:

- 1- The age range of 20-50 years
- 2- Not having experienced addiction withdrawal and relapse phenomenon



- 3- Willingness to participate in research and to answer the questionnaires
- 4- Not having other obvious disorders including severe depression and not taking psychoactive drugs.
- 5- Having at least a middle school education,

Further, the exclusion criteria included incomplete answering to the questionnaires or distorting them.

Data Collection tools

Clough's Mental Toughness (MTQ-48): This question was proposed by Peter Clough in 1982. The toughness questionnaire includes 48 items, and control and trust are considered sub-objectives, and each sub-factor of trust and control (emotional and life control, self-confidence, and interpersonal trust). The answers are measured based on a 5-point Likert scale. The sum of the scores below indicates the individual's score in the secondary statement and the total score of the statement for the entire questionnaire and mental toughness. Zehari and Minabi (31) measured the questionnaire's validity. The scores obtained from the second half of the Guttman test were equal to 0.76 and using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, it was obtained 0.79 (32).

Grant et al.'s Self-Conscious Emotions Scale (2002): This questionnaire was proposed by Grant et al. (2002) and measures self-conscious emotions on a five-point Likert scale (never to so much), which includes the sub-argument of identification (6 items), identification (5 items), create or communicate (7 items), environment (10 items) and solve or decide about very big and severe problems (5 items).

Score of 33 to 44: the level of individuals' conscious emotions is low; and

Score of 4 to 88: the people's conscious emotions are at an average level; and

Score above 88: the people's conscious emotions are at a high level.

In the research done by Kauer et al. (33), in addition to face validity, the reliability of Cronbach's alpha was obtained at 0.83. Its validity in Besharat and Bezazian's research (30) was obtained 0.71 using Cronbach's Alpha.

Johnson and his colleagues' Dark Triangle Questionnaire (2010): Johnson and Webster's (2010) dark triangle scale consists of a 12-item self-report questionnaire that includes three dark personality traits of Machiavellianism (1, 2, 3, 4), psychopathy (5, 6, 7, 8), and narcissism (9, 10, 11, 12). Sadeghi (16) measured the reliability of this scale equal to 0.86 using Cronbach's alpha. Shahbazizadeh et al. (13) reported the internal consistency of this questionnaire as 0.82 in Iran; Mohammadkhani et al. ranked it with a positive score using Cronbach's alpha (17).

After the scores of the submitted questionnaires were entered into SPSS software and the real data were obtained, at first, the mean, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum were presented using descriptive statistics. Then, they were presented in the related Tables. Next, the hypotheses were tested and analyzed based on the multivariate variance test, and the significance of the hypotheses was evaluated.

Results

Descriptive results

First, the descriptive data of the research variables including the mean, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum of the scores obtained by the testees are presented in Table 1.



Table 1. Description of research variables

Variables	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum score	Maximum score
Mental strength				
Challenge	25.04	2.07	11	40
Commitment	33.24	2.68	11	56
Control	39.37	2.45	12	67
Trust	33.84	2.70	10	57
Total score of mental strength	132.22	11.20	44	220
Self-conscious emotions				
Recognition	18.57	1.35	7	30
Identification	15.80	1.21	6	25
Creation or communication	22.57	1.97	9	35
Environmentalism	28.53	2.87	10	47
Problem-solving or decision-making	16.92	1.78	8	25
Total score of self-conscious emotions	101.46	9.46	40	162
Dark triad personality traits				
Machiavellianism	12.37	1.41	4	20
Psychopathy	15.98	1.32	6	25
Narcissism	12.99	1.35	4	20
Total score of dark triad personality traits	40.91	5.35	14	65

Analytical findings

- ✓ Independence of scores (errors): Each person's score should be independent of other people's one. In other words, any observation or measurement should not be deeply influenced by other observations or measurements.
- ✓ Normality: Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to check normality, the results of which are presented in Table 4-7.

Table 2. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test results

Variables	Kolmogorov-Smirnov test		
	Z	Significance level	Test result
Mental toughness	0.97	0.01	Normal
Self-conscious emotions	0.68	0.24	Normal
Dark personality trait	0.71	0.16	Normal

According to the assumption of normality of data and significance level of variables, parametric tests can be applied.

1- There is a relationship between mental toughness and dark personality traits in addicted persons.

The multiple correlation matrix was used to investigate this hypothesis, the results of which are presented in Table 3:

Table 3- Correlation matrix between mental toughness and dark triad personality traits

Variable	Machiavellianism	psychopathy	Narcissism	Challenge	Commitment	Control	Trust
Machiavellianism	1						
psychopathy	0.326**	1					
Narcissism	0.810**	0.818**	1				
Challenge	-0.056	0.063	0.005	1			
Commitment	0.045	0.0118*	0.100	0.582**	1		
Control	-0.017	0.044	0.017	0.500**	0.648**	1	
Trust	-0.091	-0.062	-0.094	0.162**	0.324**	0.426**	1

** Correlation is significant at 1% level (two-sided) * Correlation is significant at 5% level (two-sided)

Then, considering the correlation matrix and using the Pearson correlation test, the relationship between mental toughness and the dark triad personality traits is analyzed.

Table 4. Simple correlation coefficient between mental toughness and dark triad personality traits

Statistical index	Dark triad personality traits		
	Correlation coefficient	Determination coefficient R ²	Significance level P
Mental toughness	-0.57	0.32	0.001

As it is observed in Table 4, the value of Pearson's correlation coefficient of the variable of mental toughness and the dark triad personality traits is ($r = -0.57$), which is significant at the ($p < 0.001$) level. It means that there is a negative correlation between mental toughness and the dark triad personality traits. Therefore, it can be concluded that people with high-level mental toughness have less dark triad personality traits. So, the first hypothesis of this research is confirmed at the $p < 0.001$ level.

2- There is a relationship between self-conscious emotions and dark personality traits in drug addicts.



To investigate this hypothesis, a multiple correlation matrix was used, the results of which are presented in Table 5:

Table 5- Correlation matrix between the dark personality traits and self-conscious emotions

Variable	Machiavellianism	psychopathy	Narcissism	Recognition	Identification	Environmentalism	Problem-solving
Machiavellianism	1						
psychopathy	0.326**	1					
Narcissism	0.810**	0.818**	1				
Recognition	0.084	0.017	0.059	1			
Identification	0.425**	0.334**	0.730**	0.725**	1		
Environmentalism	-0.556	-0.103	-0.230	0.578**	0.754**	1	
Problem-solving	0.456	0.643	0.467	0.245	0.457	0.011	1

** ** Correlation is significant at 1% level (two-sided) * Correlation is significant at 5% level (two-sided)

Then, according to the correlation matrix and using the Pearson correlation test, the relationship between self-conscious emotions and the dark triad personality traits is analyzed.

Table 6. Simple correlation coefficients between self-conscious emotions and triad personality traits

Statistical index	Dark triad personality traits		
	Correlation coefficient	Determination coefficient R ²	Significance level P
Self-conscious emotions	-0.54	0.29	0.001

As it is observed in Table 6, the value of Pearson's correlation coefficient of the variable of self-conscious emotions and the dark triad personality traits is ($r=-0.54$), which is significant at the ($p<0.001$) level. It means that there is a negative correlation between self-conscious emotions and the dark triad personality traits. Therefore, it can be concluded that people with high-level self-conscious emotions have less dark triad personality traits. So, the second hypothesis of this research is confirmed at the $p<0.001$ level.

Discussion and conclusion

The findings of this research revealed that there is a negative and significant relationship between mental strength and dark triad personality traits, and regarding the Pearson correlation results, the above-mentioned hypothesis is confirmed ($p < 0.001$). The findings of the present research correspond to the result of studies done by Teixeira et al. (2017), Kober (2013), Shahbazizadeh et al. (2015), and Razavi et al. (2019).

According to the findings, it can be concluded that mental toughness can effectively solve very severe and important interpersonal problems and is used as a source of resistance and as a protective spray against unpleasant events. Therefore, it can be said that people with higher-level mental toughness experience more dark traits against dark trait inhibitors. They cause the dark trait to expire, so more dark traits can be replicated. Therefore, having triad dark personality traits enhances the power to fight against growth.

Whereas the individual's mind and mental images are his/her psychological reactions to the surrounding environment and these reactions present the individual's personality to people and society, it is important to examine the mental context with these personality traits (10). Within this profound effect on dark traits, the point is that people can resist the negative and annoying aspects of personality traits including dark traits, future forecasting, and its formation. Therefore, it seems there is a relationship between mental toughness and personality traits (13). Furthermore, the results showed that there is a negative and significant relationship between self-conscious emotions and dark triad personality traits. Regarding the Pearson correlation results, the above-mentioned hypothesis is confirmed ($p < 0.001$), and the result of the present research corresponds to the results of studies done by Vala (2019), Tafipour et al. (2016), Kircaburun (2016) and Azeiteiro, Nicolau, Caetano & Caeiro (2012).

Since self-conscious emotions involve the individual's precision and awareness of correcting the negative behavior and not making mistakes and, on the other hand, dark traits are negative and unpleasant, or they can have personality from one specific perspective in a person towards Others??? In other words, the dark triad personality traits would be decreased with the increase of conscious emotions (15), and Schimmenti et al. (14) revealed that self-conscious emotions have a significant relationship with dark traits. According to these findings, it can be concluded that if people act positively in the case of consciousness, this very big and severe problem will harm dark traits, and active people monitor their behavior concerning others, and this would lead them to improve their social and moral behavior. Therefore, the considerable and profound effect of self-consciousness on dark traits can make women increase their emotional control and reduce the profound and negative impact on their dark traits, which in turn has a significant and profound effect on dark traits, too.

The sample of this research included the drug-addicted persons settled in desert rehabilitation centers at the city level, who were placed in higher and lower categories after checking the results. Further, it should be noted that the number of addicted persons in other cities had limited restrictions.

The findings of this research can help the disease diagnosis and treatment, and discover the factors affecting it. It is also expected these findings be used in the treatment of drug addiction in young people and students. It should be stated that the present research was conducted on the addicted men settled in rehabilitation centers of Marivan City, and it is better to investigate the



most comprehensive phenomena required. Further, it is required to study different groups of society, including students, turgid women in the house, and any other places in the community. Moreover, other cities are conducting research in this field.

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