

Dark triad, risk propensity and interpersonal relationship satisfaction in clients with substance use disorder

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Abstract

Objective: To examine the relationship of drug addicts with personality triad, risk propensity and interpersonal relationship satisfaction.

Methods: The correlational study was conducted from September 2019 to February 2020 in different hospitals of Lahore, Pakistan, and comprised male drug addicts aged 18-30 years. Data was collected using the Dark Triad of Personality scale, the Risk Propensity Scale and the Interpersonal Relationship Satisfaction Scale. Data was analysed using SPSS 21.

Results: There were 100 men with a mean age of 25.03 ± 3.82 years.

Conclusion: Dark triad and risk propensity significantly predicted interpersonal relationship satisfaction, while narcissism did not predict interpersonal relationship satisfaction.

Keywords: Dark triad, Risk propensity, Interpersonal relationship satisfaction, Drug addicts. (JPMA 72: 444; 2022)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47391/JPMA.0177>

Introduction

Substance use disorder (SUD) is a psychological disorder which affects the individual's brain and behaviour. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), substance use can lead to psychological and physical dependence on particular substances. Dependence is defined as a collection of behavioural, psychological and physical phenomena which develops after recurrent use of substance which involves a strong craving to use the drug, problems in adjusting drug use, and continuing its use in spite of destructive results. It also involves increased tolerance and at times a state of body withdrawal.¹ Substance use has been increasing day by day throughout the world and even in Pakistan.² Many people use different types of substances which influence their life. Majority of drug users consists of young population aged 15-39 years and is more common in middle and lower classes of society.³ Three traits of personality, narcissism, machiavellianism and psychopathy, are collectively called dark triad of personality due to their negative features. It is a collection of traits involving the tendency to be admired and get exceptional behaviour, called narcissism, to be heartless and inconsiderate, called psychopathy, and to control others, called machiavellianism.⁴ Two dark personality traits, narcissism and psychopathy, are more linked with risk behaviours.⁵ Young adults with their friends are more likely to perform risky behaviour in groups.⁶ The term risk propensity is used to explain a risk-engaging behaviour of the person who is ready to get involved in

risky behaviour despite knowing its possible damage. Some individuals are more likely to enjoy risk-taking activities than the others.⁷ Relationship satisfaction is the detail estimation of one's relationship. Relationship satisfaction is not an attribute of a relationship; it is a detailed point of view involving opinions and experiences of individuals about their relations.⁸ Individuals who are mostly involved in drug-related activity or use any kind of drugs, leave their families to suffer from many problems, particularly their wives have low satisfaction within the relationship.⁹

Studies have reported that as psychopathy increases, quality of behaviour decreases, as psychopathy and narcissism have positive relationships with drug-taking behaviour.¹⁰ Drug use was shown to either moderately or completely mediate the association between dark triad and drug-use behaviour.¹¹ Individuals dependent on substance suffer from notable narcissistic disturbances and are more likely to associate with narcissist vulnerability than grandiosity.¹² Males have more criminal activities due to substance abuse and get treatment compared to females.¹³ Alcoholics are obsessed with alcohol consumption, neglect the needs and circumstances of others and are unable to assume their expected roles and responsibilities.¹⁴ The presence of psychological distress leads to decreased relationship satisfaction in the wives of substance users. Co-dependence and relationship satisfaction are significantly correlated in the wives of individuals who drink alcohol.¹⁵ Both sensation-seeking and impulsivity indicate risk propensity in adolescents and adults.¹⁶ Family commitments and interactional patterns are negatively correlated with moral disengagement and

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its mechanisms.¹⁷

The current study was planned to examine the relationship of drug addicts with dark triad, risk propensity and interpersonal relationship satisfaction.

Subjects and Methods

The correlational study was conducted from September 2019 to February 2020 in different hospitals of Lahore, Pakistan. After approval from the ethics review board of Riphah International University, Lahore, the sample size was calculated using G-power calculator.¹⁸ The sample was raised using non-probability purposive sampling technique from psychiatric wards of different government and private hospitals after taking permission from respective institutional authorities. A total of 8 health facilities were approached, but permission was granted by five only. Those included were male subjects aged 18-30 years having SUD, as defined by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-Fifth Edition (DSM-5).¹⁹ The subjects were included regardless of their marital status or whether they had addiction to single or multiple substances. Those diagnosed with any other psychological illness, had history of comorbid neurotic disorder, psychotic disorder, and physically handicapped individuals were excluded.

After taking informed consent from the subjects, data was collected using a self-generated demographic questionnaire to gather information related to age, education, birth order, marital status, occupation, relationship with friends and family, drug-use frequency, risk-engaging behaviour and difficulties due to drug use.

Further, the Urdu version of the Dark Triad of Personality Scale (D3-Short) 4 was used to check features of personality traits. The scale comprised 27 items. It is scored on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. High scores in the subscales indicate that the individual belongs to that personality trait, such as machiavellianism, narcissism and psychopathy. The reliability of machiavellianism is 0.78, narcissism 0.77 and psychopathy 0.80. In the current study, the Cronbach alpha of machiavellianism was 0.59, narcissism 0.67 and psychopathy 0.64.

The Risk Propensity Scale (RPS)⁷ having 7 items was used which was translated into Urdu language according to standardized procedure of Mobilization around an integration project (MAPI) guidelines after getting permission from the original author.²⁰ It is a 9-point Likert scale, ranging from 1= completely disagree and 9 = completely agree. High scores on indicate people's increased level of involvement in risky behaviour. The

reliability of the scale is 0.80. In the present study, the Cronbach alpha reliability was 0.53, which showed average reliability.

The Urdu version of the Interpersonal Relationship Satisfaction Scale (IRSS),²¹ comprising 7 items was used. It is scored on a 7-point likert scale, ranging from 0 = very dissatisfied to 6 = very satisfied. High scores show a very satisfying relationship. The reliability coefficient of IRSS was 0.74.

The questionnaire was self-administered to the participants one by one. Data was analysed using SPSS 21. Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis was used to explore the relationship among the variables. Multiple Hierarchical Regression Analysis was used to assess the prediction of interpersonal relationship satisfaction using patient characteristics.

Results

Of the 120 men approached, 100(83.3%) represented the final sample with a mean age of 25.03±3.82 years.

Table-1: Summary of correlations, mean and standard deviation for scores on dark triad, risk propensity and interpersonal relationship satisfaction of the participants.

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	Mean±SD
1 SD	-	0.66**	0.81**	0.84**	0.39**	-0.32**	97.51±10.8
2 SDM	-	-	0.26**	0.39**	0.33**	-0.28**	34.28±3.97
3 SDN	-	-	-	0.56**	0.27**	-0.16	30.99±5.14
4 SDP	-	-	-	-	0.33**	-0.32**	32.24±4.73
5 RP	-	-	-	-	-	-0.37**	35.85±7.34
6 RSS	-	-	-	-	-	-	23.63±7.92

** $p < 0.01$, M: Mean, SD: Standard deviation, SDM: Short dark triad-machiavellianism, SDN: Short dark triad-narcissism, SDP: Short dark triad-psychopathy, RP: Risk propensity, RSS: Relationship satisfaction scale.

Table-2: Multiple regression analysis predicting interpersonal relationship satisfaction on dark triad, risk propensity and demographic characteristics in subjects with substance use disorder.

Interpersonal Relationship Satisfaction Predictors	Substance Abuse Clients ΔR^2	B
Step 1	0.13***	
Education (Primary)		0.17***
Frequency of Drug (Moderate)		0.16***
Risk Propensity (Yes)		-0.18***
Difficulties due to drug (Financial)		-0.23***
Step 2		
Dark Triad (Machiavellianism)	0.07**	-0.28**
Dark Triad (Narcissism)	0.01	-0.16
Dark Triad (Psychopathy)	0.09***	-0.32***
Step 3		
Risk Propensity	0.12***	-0.37***
Total R^2	0.52	

*** $p < .005$, ** $p < .001$; a. Dependent Variable: Interpersonal Relationship Satisfaction; b. Predictors in the Models: Primary, Moderate, Yes, Financial, Dark Triad (Machiavellianism, Narcissism & Psychopathy) and Risk Propensity.

Personality change after using drugs were reported by 67(67%) participants, while 59(59%) participants were involved in risk-taking behaviours after using drugs. Mean scores of all the scales were noted (Table-1).

Individuals who had dark personality traits had greater interpersonal relationship satisfaction ($p < 0.05$). Narcissism had no impact on interpersonal relationship satisfaction ($p > 0.05$). High level of risk propensity indicated low interpersonal relationship satisfaction ($p < 0.05$) (Table-2).

Discussion

The findings indicated that dark triad and risk propensity were significantly positively associated with each other ($r = 0.39$) which showed that if dark triad personality traits, like machiavellianism, narcissism and psychopathy, were highly present in an individual, then he will also indulge more in risk-taking behaviour. Previous literature also reported similar result.²²

The current study found that dark triad and its machiavellianism and psychopathy subscales had significant negative correlation with interpersonal relationship satisfaction, whereas narcissism had no significant association with it. One study reported that machiavellianism and psychopathy had negative relationship with conflict communication, whereas narcissism had no significant relationship with conflict communication in their relationship.²³ The present research showed that risk propensity also had negative significant association with interpersonal relationship satisfaction, which is line with previous studies.²⁴ Another study concluded that higher level of interpersonal relationship was associated with low involvement in risky behaviour.²⁵

The current findings are in concurrence with literature.²⁶ According to the one study, the risk-taking factor was predictor of relationship satisfaction. Individuals more involved in risky behaviour have lower level of satisfaction in their relationship.²⁴

The current study collected data only from Lahore and only related to men. These are the study's limitations. Further studies should be conducted on females so that their perceptiveness can be explored in this regard. Also, qualitative studies should be conducted on the subject for in-depth research on the phenomenon. Besides, indigenous data-collection tools should be developed according to Pakistani culture so that the participants may understand and valid information may thus be obtained.

Conclusion

Machiavellianism and psychopathy personality traits affected satisfaction of one's relationship, whereas

narcissism was not associated with relationship satisfaction. Substance users who take more risk are less satisfied with their relationship. Machiavellianism and psychopathy along with risk propensity are predictors of interpersonal relationship satisfaction. This indicates that substance users have dark personality traits and are more likely to engage in risky behaviour and are less satisfied in terms of relationships in their lives.

Disclaimer: None.

Conflict of interest: None.

Source of Funding: None.

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