



Dark Triad Traits and Peer Influence on Mental Well-Being among University Students

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ABSTRACT

The present study examines the relationship between the dark triad traits and peer influence on mental well-being among university students. A purposive sampling technique will be used, and data will be collected from different universities the sample (N=300) comprised of students (male and female) with an age range of 20-30 i.e. 20-25 years (young adults) and 26-30 years (middle age) WHO, 2018 in Rawalpindi and Islamabad Pakistan. The variable would be marked through Measures of the Dark Triad Dirty Dozen (DTDD) by Jonason, 2010, Peer Pressure Questionnaires (PPQ) by Sunil, et al., 2016 and Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) by Tennant, et al., 2007 were used to access the study variables. The results show a negative relationship between dark triad traits with the mental well-being of university students and a positive relationship between peer influence and the mental well-being of university students. The data will be analyzed by using a statistical package for social sciences IBM SPSS.



Introduction

Mental health is all about how someone's mind; and behavior are the main indicators of their mental health. A person with good mental health typically feels content and in control, has effective stress management skills, and gets along with other people. They are not overly bothered or apprehensive, and they can handle day-to-day difficulties without being overwhelmed (APA, 2018).

Having a stable, balanced attitude that enables to use of abilities and talents in a way that aligns

with societal norms is similar to having good mental health. It all comes down to having a positive self-image and being able to accomplish things that other people find admirable. Therefore, having good mental health makes it easier for you to feel like you belong in the world and to positively impact your community (Galderisi, et al., 2015).

The three main pillars of mental health are thought, emotion, and behavior. Mental health illnesses such as depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, addiction, and other conditions can have a variety of effects on a person's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. It is true that student's mental health may be impacted by the need to maintain their educational routes and succeed in a very competitive academic environment (Melnny, 2023). The sequential interaction over time between the organism (perception, coping mechanisms) and the environment (external challenges) is how pressure is typically defined (Cohen, et al., 1995; Gunnar, et al., 2007; Lazarus, et al., 1984). As a result, the mental health of students is an urgent issue that requires attention and could have an impact on both students and institutions (Martineau, et al., 2017). In addition, pressure is described as a person's self-reported feelings of being unable to handle a variety of common life demands (Felton, et al., 2017). There are reports of increased pressures and emotional consequences experienced by university students, indicating that the rise in mental health difficulties and demands has certainly reached academia (Johnson, et al., 2022). Academic careers have many advantages, but they also frequently come with responsibilities that can affect well-being and make people more vulnerable to psychological distress and poor mental health (Hill, et al., 2022). This narrative review seeks to explore the information that currently exists regarding psychological pressures at university that affect students and to highlight elements that contribute to their mental health difficulties.

While existing research does recognize the effects of Dark Triad traits and peer influences on mental health, it fails to provide a comprehensive examination of how these two factors interact in the context of higher education. This research aims to fill this information vacuum by investigating how peer affects the relationship between Dark Triad traits and mental well-being among university students. By doing this, it hopes to further understand the psychological mechanisms underlying mental health in academic environments (Demeter, et al., 2024).

Students in the universities of Pakistan face so many issues that negatively impact their mental health due to the manipulative or psychopathic behavior of their friends (Demeter, et al., 2024). The potential harm that the Dark Triad characteristics of narcissism, psychopathy, and machiavellianism might do to students' mental health makes these problems more visible (Bagheri, et al., 2021). Environmental and genetic variables work together to develop personality (Carroll et al., 2021). Family relationships vary greatly in quality throughout society (Ross et al., 2005). Therefore, in order to comprehend child growth, it is crucial to consider the variations in every family. Since peer interactions are a developing child's initial experiences with bonding, our study has focused on them. They progressively acquire situation-appropriate behavioral techniques by learning from how others treat them. The goal of our study was to determine which familial characteristics can contribute to a higher appearance of Dark Triad traits (Ferencz et al., 2023).

Learning how Dark Triad qualities impact mental health via social relationships is essential for several reasons (Belwal, et al., 2023). The way college students interact with one another has a major impact on their college experience and the results that they achieve (Dębska, et al., 2021). Student relationships within peer networks may be impacted by manipulative interpersonal techniques and self-centeredness, which are features associated with the Dark Triad (Emagnaw, 2022). Remarkably little research has been done on the connection between peer

interactions and the Dark Traits. As far as we know, no research has been done on Machiavellian people's sibling relationships. Machiavellianism is linked to the devaluation of intimacy and closeness in friendships, which are viewed as peer relationships akin to those of siblings (Lyons et al., 2010). According to Abell et al. (2018), Machiavellian tendencies can make people more competitive and less cooperative and reciprocal in their friendships. Higher degrees of narcissism were found to predict lower levels of warmth and higher levels of conflict in adult peer relationships (Finzi-Dottan and Cohen, 2010). Furthermore, narcissistic tendencies were made worse by parental favoritism, particularly paternal. Youth showing psychopathic behavior reported heightened levels of conflict in their peer interactions (Munoz, et al., 2008), and qualities connected to psychopathy such as delinquency and lack of empathy were found to be predictive of severe inter peer violence (Cooke, et al., 2008).

The three underlying personality qualities that make up the Dark Triad (DT) are psychopathy, narcissism, and machiavellianism (Morelli, et al., 2021). All three of these characteristics overlap to some extent, yet they are also distinct. Malice, aggressiveness, emotional numbness, hypocrisy, and self-promotion are some of the negative characteristics shared by all three attributes (Muris, et al., 2022).

Three interconnected socially aversive features make up the Dark Triad (DT) (Williams et al., 2004). Subclinical psychopathy, subclinical narcissism, and Machiavellianism. The lack of agreeableness (Paulhus et al., 2004), lack of honesty and humility (Book et al., 2015; Lee et al., 2014), lack of empathy (Baron et al., 2011), maladaptive schemas linked to impaired limits (Lang, 2016), and antagonism (Dinic et al., 2021) are the common core of the DT, according to various theoretical approaches. Long-term oriented manipulation and alliance-building are distinctive features of Machiavellianism, which is defined as being cynical, amoral, and manipulative (Christie et al., 1970) (Bereczkei et al., 2014; Jones et al., 2014). Exhibitionistic inclinations and a distinctively grandiose self-image with a sense of entitlement are characteristics of narcissistic people (Raskin et al., 1988). In normative samples, these traits are highly connected with good self-esteem (Campbell et al., 2002). Impulsivity and callousness are two characteristics that are specific to psychopathy (Jones et al., 2014).

Hypocrisy and control are traits associated with machiavellianism, whereas narcissism is characterized by an inflated sense of self-importance and a tendency towards domination (Pabian, et al., 2015). DT scores may foretell both good and bad mental health consequences. Take narcissism and psychopathy as two examples of DT categories that are inversely related to anxiety symptoms. A negative correlation between depression and psychopathy was discovered by (Stinson, et al., 2021), who showed that depressive symptoms are associated with DT characteristics. According to some research, there is a correlation between psychopathy, machiavellianism, and depression.

Furthermore, other research has linked machiavellianism to greater levels of mental toughness, narcissism to both positive and negative health indicators and diseases, and psychopathy to poor health outcomes, stress, impulsivity, cardiovascular disease, sexual behavior, substance misuse, risk-taking, and exploitative peer influence (Turan, et al., 2024). Several studies have delved into the connection between peer influences, dark triad traits, and mental well-being among university students. For example, a study found that peer group support and acceptance can act as a protective factor against the detrimental effects of dark triad traits on mental well-being (Pilch, 2020; Turan et al., 2024).

The idea that a person's mental health may cause significant shifts in their perspective and worldview has gained more and more traction in the last 30 years (Joshani, 2021). Recognizing and accepting oneself as one is part of the broader mindful practice of openness and acceptance (Dębska, et al., 2021). Also, compared to those who aren't mentally well, those who generally exhibit traits like self-acceptance, empathy, and compassion also tend to have superior interpersonal skills, superior communication abilities, and a typically better quality of life (Johnson, et al., 2022).

Traditionally, the Dark Triad traits are viewed as three distinct but interrelated entities (Paulhus, et al., 2022). However, recent research suggests they might be different aspects of a single underlying construct (Jonason, et al., 2023) and found that narcissism, psychopathy, and machiavellianism share a common core, explaining nearly half of the variation seen in these traits. Moreover, the relationships between the Dark Triad traits and factors like agreeableness are similar, supporting the idea of a unified construct. Therefore, any short measure of the Dark Triad should allow for scoring both as a single composite scale and as three interconnected subscales (Paulhus, et al., 2022).

Research consistently shows that the Dark Triad traits are linked to negative outcomes. Aghababaei, 2021 found that while narcissism and psychopathy were positively correlated with well-being in Polish undergraduates, machiavellianism was not. A subsequent study by (Aghababaei, 2019) involving Iranian students revealed that narcissism was associated with higher well-being, whereas psychopathy and machiavellianism were linked to lower well-being. (Limone, et al., 2020) also found a positive relationship between narcissism and subjective well-being, but no such relationship between psychopathy and Machiavellianism (Ferencz, et al., 2023). Aghababaei and Błachnio (2021) further explored how the Dark Triad traits relate to both eudaimonic (meaningful life) and hedonic (pleasure-based) well-being. They found that, after accounting for shared variance, narcissism's positive association with well-being became more pronounced, while psychopathy was linked to lower levels of both types of well-being. This suggests that a sub-clinical level of narcissism might enhance life satisfaction. Johanson (2021) investigated these traits in examining the role of beliefs about happiness as intermediaries. This study examined the links between the Dark Triad personality traits (machiavellianism, psychopathy, and narcissism) and mental well-being in a sample of 1,177 Korean adults. The researchers also explored how different conceptions of happiness mediated these relationships. They considered eight conceptions of happiness (such as the fragility of happiness and eudemonism), three aspects of hedonic well-being (such as life satisfaction), and two aspects of eudemonic well-being such as psychological well-being (Johanson, 2021).

The findings revealed that machiavellianism and psychopathy were negatively associated with well-being, while narcissism had a positive association with well-being (Ferencz, et al., 2023). The study also found that people with high levels of machiavellianism and psychopathy valued personal happiness but perceived it as being beyond their control and believed it could lead to negative outcomes. Conversely, individuals with high narcissism generally held positive views about happiness. Furthermore, the different conceptions of happiness partially mediated the relationships between the Dark Triad traits and well-being (Joshani, 2021).

Limone (2020) stated that the Dark Triad refers to three closely related personality traits: machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy. These traits are considered socially aversive and can have significant implications for interpersonal relationships and individual behavior.

Machiavellianism is characterized by manipulation, exploitation of others, a cynical disregard for morality, and a focus on self-interest and personal gain. Research indicates that individuals high in Machiavellianism often engage in manipulative behaviors and deceit, which can harm their social relationships and mental well-being (Jones, et al., 2020).

Narcissism involves grandiosity, a sense of entitlement, dominance, and a lack of empathy. Narcissistic individuals often have an inflated sense of their own importance and crave admiration. While some aspects of narcissism, like self-confidence, can be adaptive, excessive narcissism can lead to interpersonal problems and contribute to mental health issues such as depression and anxiety when individuals do not receive the admiration they expect (Miller, et al., 2021).

Psychopathy is characterized by high impulsivity, low empathy, and antisocial behaviors. Psychopathic individuals tend to be callous, unemotional, and prone to engaging in risky behaviors. This lack of empathy and impulsiveness can lead to poor mental well-being and problematic social interactions (Hare, et al., 2021).

Peers play a significant role in the development and behavior of university students. Peer influences can be both positive and negative and can significantly impact students' mental well-being and behavior. Positive peer influence involves supportive peers who can provide emotional support, enhance self-esteem, and promote healthy behaviors and coping strategies. Positive peer interactions are linked to higher levels of mental well-being (Hartup, 2020). Conversely, negative peer influence involves peers who encourage negative behaviors such as substance abuse, academic dishonesty, and risky sexual behaviors. Negative peer influences can exacerbate mental health issues and lead to decreased well-being (Prinstein, et al., 2021). The interaction between Dark Triad traits and peer influences is complex and can significantly impact the mental well-being of university students. Peer influence on Dark Triad traits shows that individuals with high levels of these traits may attract similar peers, creating a reinforcing environment that exacerbates manipulative, narcissistic, or psychopathic behaviors. This can lead to increased interpersonal conflict and stress, negatively impacting mental well-being (Jonason, et al., 2020). Mitigating the effects of positive peer influence suggests that positive peer relationships may buffer the adverse effects of Dark Triad traits on mental well-being. Supportive peers can provide emotional support and promote healthy coping mechanisms, potentially mitigating the negative impact of Dark Triad traits (Wang, et al., 2018). On the other hand, negative peer influence can exacerbate the harmful effects of Dark Triad traits. Peers who engage in antisocial or manipulative behaviors can reinforce these traits, leading to poorer mental well-being and increased stress (LeBreton, et al., 2018).

Understanding the role of peer influences is crucial in examining the relationship between Dark Triad traits and mental well-being among university students. While Dark Triad traits are associated with various negative outcomes, the presence of supportive peer relationships can potentially mitigate these effects, highlighting the importance of fostering positive social environments in university settings. Further research is needed to explore these dynamics and develop interventions that promote mental well-being among students with high levels of Dark Triad traits (Ferencz, et al., 2023). The current study aims to investigate how peer influences interact with Dark Triad traits to affect mental well-being among university students, filling a crucial gap in the literature and providing insights into how these complex relationships can inform interventions to enhance student well-being (Hill, et al., 2022).

Methodology

The study will be conducted by using a cross-sectional survey method. The self-reported survey will be utilized. In the current study, the purposive sampling technique will be used to collect data. Samples will be taken from different universities in Rawalpindi and Islamabad Pakistan. The population will come from the capital city Rawalpindi and Islamabad in Pakistan. The researcher will focus on university teaching and non-teaching faculty in Islamabad and Rawalpindi. A purposive sampling technique will be used, and data will be collected from different universities the sample (N=300) comprised of students (male and female) with an age range of 20-30 i.e. 20-25 years (young adults) and 26-30 years (middle age) WHO, 2018 in Rawalpindi and Islamabad Pakistan. 300 participants were included in the research study. Participants would be from the age bracket of 20 years and onwards. The requirement is that they are to be able to understand the questionnaire. The population in a university setting that is academically enrolled there would not be considered. The janitorial staff, guards, or institute help would also not be considered in the population sample due to their educational insufficiency. This also goes for the age bracket of anyone below 25 years of age due to them not being eligible for a master's degree as of yet. The following instrument will be used in this study:

- Consent form
- Demographic sheet
- The Dark Triad Dirty Dozen (DTDD)
- Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS)
- Peer Influence Questionnaire (PPQ)

The consent form is designed to take permission from the participants and briefly elaborate to them on the nature and purpose of this study. Participants will be assured that information taken from them will be kept confidential and will only be used for the purpose of research. A demographic sheet will be consisting of the following variables I- e., age, gender, educational level. Initially, permission to conduct the research will be taken from the authorities of Riphah International University Board of Advanced Studies and Research (BASAR). After that, to measure the study variables, the authors of the instruments will be approached to seek permission to use their scales. After getting permission, the process of data collection will be started. Participants who meet the eligibility criteria will be approached and those who agree to participate in the study will be included in the research. Written informed consent will be given to the participants and they will be informed about their rights to safety, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw at any time. After collecting the data from the participants, data analysis will be performed to test the hypothesis and the findings will be reported in the result section. Primary data was collected for this research. Questionnaires were distributed and filled out by the participants of the sample which asked some basic questions about their psychological and physical health. Ethical guidelines given by the American psychological association (2012) will be strictly followed throughout the study. It includes.

- The dignity of the research participants is prioritized during the study.
- Confidentiality of the research data is ensured.

- All communications regarding research are honest and transparent.
- Voluntary participation of respondents in surveys is certified.
- Participants also have the right to refuse to participate in the study at any stage.
- Respondents have participated with informed consent.
- The principle of informed consent includes ensuring the participation of researchers and providing enough information so that people can understand what participation means and make a well-informed and free decision about whether to participate without pressure or any forcefulness.
- The confidentiality and anonymity of respondents are paramount.

Results

Table 1: Frequency and percentage of demographic variable (N=300)

	<i>F</i>	%
Age		
20-25 years (young adults)	234	78.0
26-30 years (middle age adults)	59	19.7
Gender		
Male	64	21.3
Female	292	78.1
Education		
Undergraduates	227	77.4
Masters	66	22.0

Note. *f* = Frequencies, and % = Percentages

Table 1 represents the frequencies and percentages of the sample of the present study. The sample comprised 300 participants including 59 males and 234 females. The students from the universities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad were approached. Participants were in 2 age groups, participants in the age group 20-25 years' female were ($f = 234$ and $\% = 78.0$). Participants within the age range 26-30 years' male were ($f = 59$ and $\% = 19.7$).

Table 2 shows that the sample size for each variable is 300. And all these variables are rated on a Likert scale 1 representing the strongly disagree and 5 representing the strongly agree. The mean value shows the real meaning of responses collected from different university students. The dirty dark triad dozen scale had 12 items with a Cronbach's alpha of .93 ($M = 2.44$, $SD = .99$). Its range is 4.00 and has skewness and kurtosis of .50 and -.12. The subset of dark triad traits, narcissism has 4 items with a Cronbach's alpha of .85 ($M = 10.4$, $SD = 4.48$). Its range is 16.0 and has skewness and kurtosis of .36 and -.58.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics for study variables (N=300)

Variables	k	A	M	SD	Range	Skewness	Kurtosis
Dark Triad	12	.93	2.44	.996	4.00	.508	-.12
Narcissism	4	.85	10.44	4.48	16.00	.36	-.58
Machiavellianism	4	.84	9.94	4.47	16.00	.49	-.43
Psychopath	4	.87	9.94	4.47	16.00	.49	-.43
Peer Pressure	25	.93	2.48	.868	4.00	.684	.462
Mental well-being	14	.90	3.28	.854	4.00	-.172	-.088

Note. k=number of items, a=alpha, M=means, SD=standard deviation.

Machiavellianism has 4 items with a Cronbach’s alpha of .84(M=9.94, SD=4.47). its range is 16.00 and has a skewness and kurtosis of .49 and -.43 Psychopath has 4 items with a Cronbach’s alpha of .87(M=9.94, SD=4.47) its range is 16.00 and has skewness and kurtosis of .49 and -.43.

The peer pressure questionnaire had 25 items with a Cronbach's alpha of .93(M= 2.48, SD=.86). its range of 4.00, and had a skewness and kurtosis of .68 and .46 respectively. The Mental Well-being Scale had 14 items with a Cronbach’s alpha of .90 (M=3.2, SD=.85). Its Range was 4.00 and had a skewness and kurtosis of -.172 and -.08 respectively.

Table 3: Correlation analysis for all study variables (N= 300)

Variables	M	SD	PSY	MAC	NAR	PI	Mental Wellbeing
PSY	9.89	4.45	1				
MAC	9.23	4.45	.738**	1			
NAR	10.5	4.49	.649**	.626**	1		
PPQ	61.65	21.67	.726**	.757**	.595**	1	
WEMWBS	46.06	11.89	-.198**	-.225**	-.173**	.303**	1

Note: M=means, SD=standard deviation, PSY=psychopath, MAC=Machiavellianism, NAR=narcissism, PI=peer influence, mental well-being.

The Pearson product-moment correlation explains the relationship between the variables. The results obtained show that there is a significant positive correlation between Machiavellianism and psychopaths, the value of the correlation between these variables is .738**. NAR is significantly correlated with a psychopath and MAC with the values of .649** and .626** respectively. PPSQ is significantly correlated with PSY, MAC, and NAR. There values are .726**,.757** and .595** respectively. WEMWBS is also negatively correlated with PSY, MAC, NAR, and PPSQ with the values of -.198**,-.225**, -.173**, and .303** respectively.

Table 4: Regression Analysis of study variables (N=300)

Variables	Mental Well- being 95% CI			
	<i>B</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>
Constant	35.8	1.9	32.0	39.7
Peer influences	.18	.04	.08	.27
Dark triad	-.03	.08	-.20	.14
Machiavellianism	.43	.22	-.00	.88
Narcissism	.08	.21	-.32	.50
Psychopat	.14	.24	-.34	.62
h R2	.63			
Δ R ²	.63			
F	18.86			
Δ F ²	18.68			

Note: *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.01

Table 4 presents the results of a regression analysis showing the relationship between various predictor variables and mental well-being among university students. The variables include peer influence, and dark triad traits (narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy). The unstandardized regression coefficients (B), their standard errors, and the 95% confidence intervals (CI) are reported.

The constant has a B value of 35.89, with a standard error of 1.98 and a 95% CI ranging from 32.00 to 39.78. Peer influence shows a positive association with mental well-being, with a B value of 0.180, a standard error of 0.048, and a 95% CI from 0.086 to 0.274. In addition, the dark triad traits show a significant negative association with mental well-being. Specifically, the dark triad composite score has a B value of -0.031, a standard error of 0.087, and a 95% CI from -0.202 to 0.140. Among the individual dark triad traits, Machiavellianism has a B value of 0.439, a standard error of 0.227, and a 95% CI from -0.007 to 0.886. Narcissism shows a B value of 0.088, with a standard error of 0.211 and a 95% CI ranging from -0.327 to 0.503. Psychopathy has a B value of 0.143, a standard error of 0.246, and a 95% CI from -0.341 to 0.627. The R² value of .63 revealed that the predictor. The Δ R² value of .63 was revealed. The F 18.86. The Δ F² value of 18.68.

These results suggest that the hypothesis, dark triad traits (narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy) are significantly negatively associated with mental health among university students. And, peer influence is positively associated with mental well-being.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to observe the relationship between Dark Triad traits and Peer Influence on mental health among university students. For this purpose, three scales were used, The Dark Triad Dirty Dozen Scale DTDD, the sub-scales are as follows: narcissism, psychopathy, and machiavellianism.(Jonason, et al., 2010), Peer Pressure Scale Questionnaire PPSQ (Sunil, et

al., 2016) Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale WEMWBS (Warwick, 2006), were used.

The current research aims to examine the relationship between Dark triad traits and Peer Influences on Mental Well-being among university students. The sample consisted of university students. The analysis was run on a sample size of 300. The age range is between above 20-25 years (young adults) to below 26-30 years (middle age adults) and 31-35 years (adults) selected physically from the private and Public sector universities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad.

The best that we can tell, this is the first study to examine the role of dark triad traits in the relationship between peer pressure and mental well-being. The findings suggested that the relationship between dark triad traits and peer pressure was mediated by mental well-being, and the peer pressure influence on mental well-being was moderated by dark triad traits at all levels of the moderator workplace stress. Furthermore, the interaction between dark triad traits and peer pressure significantly influenced the outcome of mental well-being. Furthermore, the study found that social support did not differ by gender and was a major mediating factor in the association between peer pressure and mental well-being. Additionally, social support served as a mediator between mental health and educational stress. These results contribute to a better understanding of workplace stress and the necessity of peer and managerial support to enhance and promote mental health and maintain workplace safety.

The frequencies and demographic variables for the complete sample (N=300) were acquired for a better understanding of the population characteristic. The target population itself comprised university students from different universities in Rawalpindi and Islamabad Pakistan (see Table 1). The normal distribution of data on the entire sample to check the Psychometric Properties of Study Major Scales (see Table 2).

For the first hypothesis, there will be a negative relationship between dark triad traits and mental well-being among university students, and the results in Table 4 confirmed the hypothesis. In accordance with Hyp. 1, results of the correlation analyses that were also supported by the results of multiple linear regressions showed that those who recalled more conflict or less emotional closeness in their childhood sibling relationships reported higher levels of Machiavellianism.

Given that Machiavellianism is linked to a decline in the value of intimacy and closeness in friendships (Lyons et al., 2010), as well as to a rise in competitiveness and a fall in cooperativeness in friendships (Abell et al., 2018), the aforementioned findings are not shocking. In line with the presumptions of Hypothesis 2, participants who stated that their parents preferred their siblings above them also reported higher degrees of narcissism. One way to think of parental partiality for siblings is as a narcissistic wound; narcissistic functioning can be used as a way to make up for a lack of favorable parental feedback (Horton et al., 2006). Psychopathy was higher among those who reported having more disputes with their siblings as children.

As in the case of Machiavellianism, psychopathic tendencies can arise as a result of confining relationships. But it might also be consistent with the evidence that psychopathic people's innately coercive nature leads to strained relationships (Sokić, 2019).

Teenagers who reported less emotional intimacy and more conflict in their existing sibling relationships scored higher on Machiavellianism, according to the results of the correlational studies.

These outcomes confirm the study's conclusions and are consistent with Hypothesis 2. Narcissism

was more prevalent among those who said their moms and fathers had raised them with greater emotional warmth and sensitivity. Hyp. 1 and other findings (Horton et al., 2006) that highlight unconditional positive parental feedback—that is, excessive parental warmth—as a potential etiological element in the development of narcissism are supported by this research.

Those who perceived their mothers as less affectionate toward them and their parents (father and mother) as more rejecting and overprotective also reported higher degrees of psychopathy. According to Baker et al. (2012), this pattern of diminished warmth, greater rejection, and excessive protection or control was linked to general issues with self-regulation and postponing satisfaction. These features are all part of the impulsive nature of psychopaths. However, we also hypothesize that rejection and a lack of warmth may be the primary causes of psychopathy (Guo et al., 2021), and that overprotection may really be a way for parents to deal with the irresponsible behavior of teenagers with high levels of psychopathy.

Hypothesis H2 shows the positive relationship between peer influence and mental well-being among university students. Peer influence plays a significant role in improving university students' mental health. Positive peer interactions can provide critical social support, reduce stress, and promote healthy coping strategies, all of which help to improve mental health outcomes hence proof of this hypotheses Universities should encourage and facilitate positive peer relationships to help students' mental health. The results of the study also indicated a positive connection between Mental Well-being and Peer Influences among university students. Correlation explains the relationship between the variables and the results show a significant positive correlation between PPQ and WEMWBS. The results obtained show that there is a significant positive correlation between MAC and PSY. NAR is significantly correlated with PSY and MAC. PPSQ is significantly correlated with PSY, MAC, and NAR. WEMWBS is also significantly correlated with PSY, MAC, NAR, and PPSQ respectively, according to (Table 3).

In conclusion, there have been annotations of serious and pervasive mental well-being issues that cannot be ignored, are having an impact on students, and are occasionally referred to as a crisis (Johnson, et al., 2022). Therefore, to identify, analyses, and reduce the educational stressors that adversely affect the students, a rigorous, career-wide study strategy is needed. The future survival of an educational profession that depends on a strong and tenacious staff requires such a strategy to lay the groundwork (Singh, et al., 2020). This becomes especially crucial when higher education institutions recognize how profoundly dependent staff members' success, mental health, and well-being are on those of their students (Lashuel, 2020).

Conclusion

The Dark Triad traits and peer influence on mental well-being among university students provide important insights into the complexities of human behavior and interpersonal relationships in educational settings. By proactively addressing these factors, universities can create a healthier and more inclusive environment that promotes academic success and overall student well-being.

The findings of the study fully supported all the hypotheses. The correlation to Dark triad traits is more negatively associated with peer influence. This stance was negated by the results which showcased that dark triad traits showed no gender differences associated with the mental well-being of university students. In general, dark triad traits had a significantly negative and direct effect on mental well-being among university students. Furthermore, this study observed that peer influence had a positive impact on the mental well-being of university students.

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