

Examining Dark Triad traits in relation to well-being and cognitive-emotional regulation strategies

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Introduction

Dark triad

The Dark Triad (DT) refers to a group of three closely related sub-clinical personality traits (Paulhus & Williams, 2002):

- **Machiavellianism:** associated with exploitative behavior, insincerity, and callousness.
- **Narcissism:** characterized by the tendency to exhibit showy behavior, feelings of superiority, dominance, and a strong desire for admiration.
- **Psychopathy:** characterized by engaging in thrill-seeking activities, dishonesty, self-centeredness, manipulation, and displaying antisocial behavior.

In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the attention given to studying the DT (Watts et al., 2017). Most of the investigations on the DT have concentrated on the negative effects it causes in society. However, in recent years, scientific interest has increased in the emotional consequences that such an individual may suffer. On the contrary, rather less is known about the factors involved in the well-being of this population.

Subjective well-being (SWB)

Refers to a person's evaluation of their life satisfaction (Diener et al., 2003). The SWB literature distinguishes between an affective well-being (AWB) and a cognitive well-being (CWB) component (Diener, 1984).

Emotional regulation

Is a multidimensional concept that involves the ability to modulate emotions (McRae & Gross, 2020). We can divide it in maladaptive and adaptive strategies.

Present Study

AIM:

Analyze the role of adaptive and maladaptive cognitive-emotional regulation strategies in mediating the relationship between the DT and AWB and CWB.

Methods

Sample: 678 adult volunteers ($M_{age} = 35.03$, $SD = 14.45$, with an age range from 18 to 70 years; women = 53.1%).

Scales:

- Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) to measure CWB.
- The Cognitive Emotional Regulation Questionnaire (CERQ-36) to measure cognitive regulation strategies.
- The Short Dark Triad (SD-3) to assess the DT.

Results

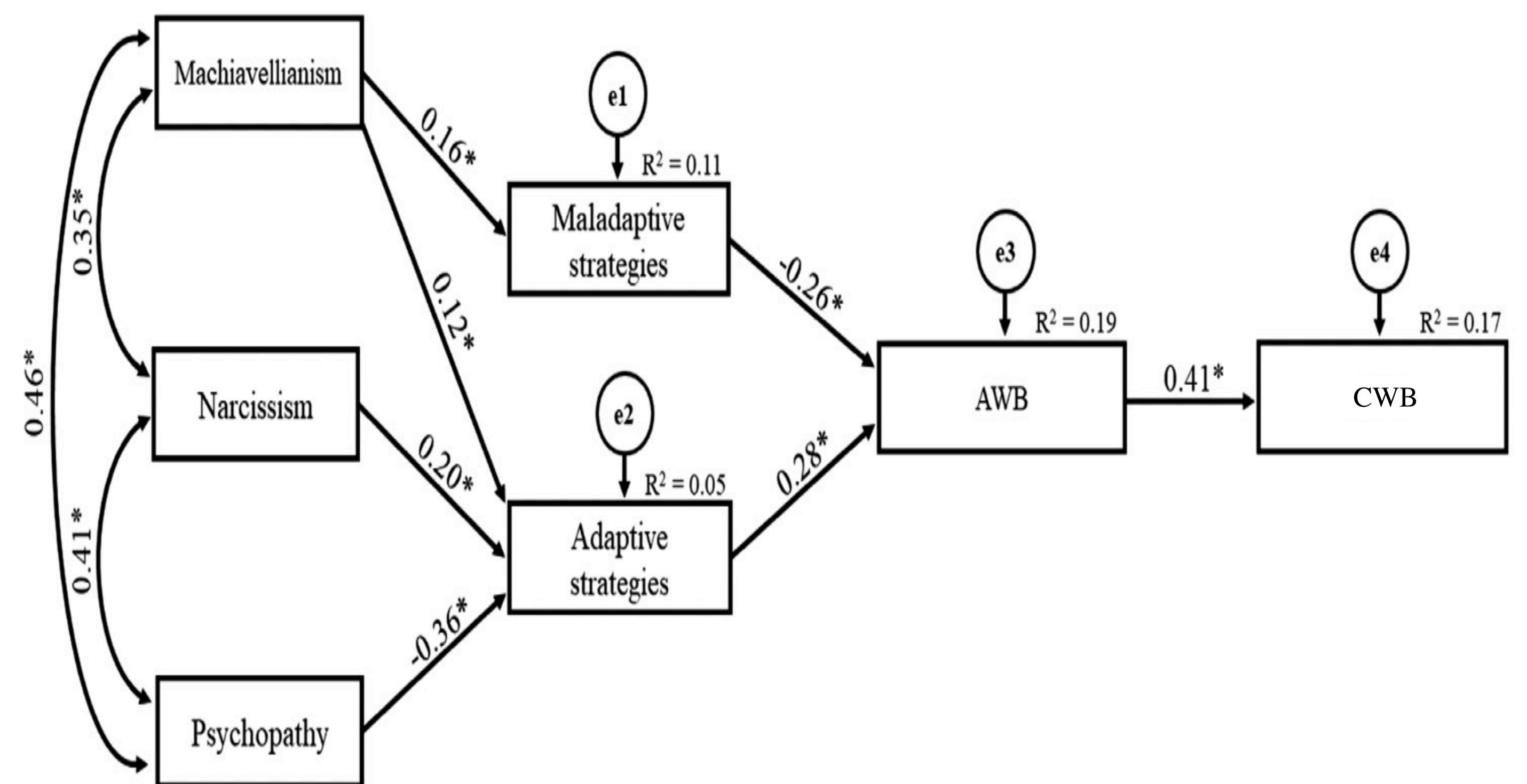


Fig. 1. Graphical representation of the model, including standardized path coefficients and explained variance (R^2). Note: An asterisk indicates significance at the $p < 0.05$ level.

Discussion

The findings revealed that individuals with high levels of DT exhibited a distinct style of emotion regulation that had an impact on their SWB. The practical implications of our findings are significant. This study validates previous research outcomes, which indicate a connection between high levels of psychopathy and Machiavellianism traits, inappropriate utilization of emotional regulation strategies, and decreased mental well-being (Akram & Stevenson, 2021).

Consequently, these findings hold potential value for guiding the development of clinical treatments and further research in this field. Specifically, training programs for individuals exhibiting high levels of DT traits, specifically Machiavellianism and psychopathy, could provide tools to enhance the adoption of adaptive strategies while diminishing maladaptive ones.

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