

Examining the relationship between the Dark Triad and depressive symptoms: A study of its sub-dimensions

Raquel Gómez-Leal¹, María José Gutiérrez-Cobo², Rosario Cabello², and Pablo Fernández-Berrocal¹

1 Department of Basic Psychology, Faculty of Psychology, University of Málaga, Spain.

2 Department of Developmental and Educational Psychology, Faculty of Psychology, University of Granada, Spain.

The Dark Triad (DT) is composed of three closely related personality traits: psychopathy, Machiavellianism, and narcissism. These traits have been linked to emotional deficits. The aim of the current study was to explore how the three personality traits comprising the DT (including sub-dimensions) could be related to depression symptoms. For these purposes, a total of seven hundred and ninety-one adults ($M = 35.76$ years; 24.91% males) completed a questionnaire battery including DT traits and depression measures. Our findings revealed that there are a series of factors characterising individuals with high DT scores that can be related to depression problems. A model explaining 26.2% of the depressive symptoms scores was composed of the callous affect and criminal tendencies sub-dimensions of psychopathy, cynical view of human nature, which is a sub-dimension of Machiavellianism, and entitlement and self-sufficiency, which are sub-dimensions of narcissism. Furthermore, the effect of these factors on depression was a function of gender. These findings may be an excellent tool for the development and implementation of better prevention and treatment programs aimed at decreasing the negative consequences suffered by individuals with high DT scores, which could potentially benefit both clinical practice and society in general. In addition, our results also indicate the importance of considering the effects of gender in the studied relationships.

Keywords: Depression, Dark triad, Psychopathy, Machiavellianism, Narcissism