

## **Relationship Between Dark Triad and Life Satisfaction among Emerging Adults**

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**Abstract**

*Cross sectional survey design was used to find out the correlation between dark triad of personality and life satisfaction among emerging adults. A total of 296 emerging adults from Malaysia were participated in this study by convenience sampling techniques. A self-administered questionnaire which consisted Satisfaction with Life Scale, Short Dark Triad Scale were utilized. Multiple Discrepancies Theory (MDT) was tailored in this study to explain the relationship between dark triad and life satisfaction. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation showed that Machiavellianism have no significant relationship with life satisfaction ( $r = -.01, N = 296, p = .82, p > .05$ ; meanwhile narcissism had a significant relationship with life satisfaction ( $r = .21, N = 296, p = .001, p > .05$ ; psychopathy was found to have no significant relationship with life satisfaction ( $r = -.01, N = 296, p = .92, p > .05$ ). Finally, males ( $M = 23.60, SD = 5.31$ ) and females ( $M = 22.85, SD = 4.48$ ) were found to differ significantly in terms of life satisfaction;  $t(296) = 161.90, p = .046$ .*

**Keywords:** Dark triad; life satisfaction; emerging adults

### **1. Introduction**

According to Diener (1984), life satisfaction is a comprehensive evaluation of attitudes and feelings regarding an individual's life at a specific point in time, ranging from negative to positive. In line with cognitive theory, life satisfaction refers to individuals' cognitive judgment of comparisons according to the compatibility of their living conditions and the standards (Diener et al., 1985). Life satisfaction is considered a cognitive component of subjective well-being. Enjoyment in life, discovering the meaning of life, consistency of satisfaction with attaining the goals, social relations, positive personal identity, physical health, and economic security are significant indicators of life satisfaction (Saari & Judge, 2004). Frey and Stutzer (2002) indicate that personality is one of the influences on life satisfaction. Narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism combine three socially aversive personality traits known as the dark triad (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). Quite a few papers studied its relationship with life satisfaction, suggesting that Machiavellianism and psychopathy are negatively correlated with life satisfaction (Ali & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2010), while narcissism is correlated positively (Rose, 2002).

The age group also serves as an important cause for life satisfaction. The emerging adulthood age group ranging from 18 to 24 years old is the critical period where they need to face numerous

changes and challenges. They encounter a lot of stressors from academic, financial, social, and so on (Dusselier et al. 2005) that may negatively affect their life satisfaction. Life satisfaction will increase with a decline in stress levels (Abolghasemi & Varaniyab, 2010). Based on the aspects of the previous study, researchers could conclude that an individual's level of life satisfaction is caused by multiple factors. The research questions studied are as follow:

- RQ1: Is there any relationship between Machiavellianism and life satisfaction?
- RQ2: Is there any relationship between narcissism and life satisfaction?
- RQ3: Is there any relationship between psychopathy and life satisfaction?
- RQ4: Is there any relationship between internet addiction and life satisfaction?
- RQ5: Are there any gender differences in life satisfaction?

### **2. Methodology**

To conduct this research, the cross-sectional survey design and quantitative method were implemented to study the relationship between dark triad, internet addiction, and life satisfaction. The questionnaire was distributed to respondents through various online platforms. A convenience sampling method was employed for data collection. 296 emerging adults from various states of Malaysia, aged 18 to 25 years

old, took part in the research. The total sample (n=296) consisted of 67.6% of females (n=200) and 32.4% of males (n=96).

The questionnaire included four parts: Part A, B, C, and D. Part A comprised five demographic information questions, such as age, gender, ethnicity, working status, and states of origin. Part B, C, D were combined with three reliable and validated instruments, which were Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) by Diener et al. (1985) and Short Dark Triad Scale (SD3-27) by Jones and Paulhus (2014). The reliability of each instrument was tested. It was found out that the 5-item Satisfaction with Life Scale acquired high reliability with Cronbach alpha ( $\alpha = .89$ ) in the pilot study, while Cronbach alpha ( $\alpha = .77$ ) in the actual study. 27-items Short Dark Triad scale obtained Cronbach alpha ( $\alpha = .78$ ) in the pilot study,

while Cronbach alpha ( $\alpha = .73$ ) in the actual study. This study obtained results from SPSS Version 23.0 through Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient and Independent Sample T-test.

### 3. Results

Pearson product moment correlation was used to investigate the relationship between dark triad, and life satisfaction. The findings revealed that there is no significant relationship between Machiavellianism and life satisfaction ( $r = -.01$ ,  $N = 296$ ,  $p = .82$ ),  $p > .05$ ; there is a significant positive relationship between narcissism and life satisfaction ( $r = .21$ ,  $N = 296$ ,  $p = .001$ ),  $p > .05$ ; there is no significant relationship between psychopath and life satisfaction ( $r = -.01$ ,  $N = 296$ ,  $p = .92$ ),  $p > .05$ .

Table 1. Correlations among Machiavellianism, narcissism, psychopathy, and life satisfaction

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. Life Satisfaction	-	-.01	.21*	-.01	-.01
2. Machiavellianism	-.01	-			
3. Narcissism	.21*		-		
4. Psychopathy	-.01			-	

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level 92-tailed)

Besides, an independent sample T-test was employed to test the gender difference in life satisfaction. From the study results, it was found that there is a significant gender difference in life

satisfaction,  $t(162) = 1.21$ ,  $p = .23$ . Male ( $M = 23.60$ ,  $SD = 5.31$ ) scored higher level of life satisfaction than female ( $M = 22.85$ ,  $SD = 4.48$ ).

Table 2. Gender difference in life satisfaction

	Male		Female		df	t	95% CI for Mean Difference	p	
	M	SD	M	SD					
Life satisfaction	23.60	5.31	22.85	4.48	161.90	1.21	-.48	2.00	.046*

### 3. Discussion, Implication, and Conclusion

The current study's finding reveals that individuals with Machiavellianism traits being exploitative and manipulative towards other people (Christie & Geis, 1970) have no association with their life satisfaction. The result is inconsistent with most of the past studies, which stated that Machiavellianism has a significant negative relationship with life satisfaction (Aghababaei & Błachnio, 2015; Ali & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2010; Kiamarsi & Abdi, 2008; Paulhus & Williams, 2002). These studies indicated that individuals with high Machiavellianism traits tend to have low satisfaction in life and vice versa. Life satisfaction is one's global evaluation of feelings and attitudes about their life (Diener, 1984). However, individuals with Machiavellianism might be characterized by a deficiency of feelings and inability to recognize their own emotions (Ain et al., 2013). Thus, it could be inferred that the deficits of

Machiavellians in identifying their feelings and emotions make it difficult to determine whether there is a relationship between Machiavellianism and life satisfaction.

The current study's findings showed that when individuals score higher in narcissism, they tend to have higher life satisfaction. This result is supported by Hill and Roberts (2012). Their study revealed that age could be the moderator that links narcissism and life satisfaction together. Adolescence and emerging adults significantly show a positive relationship between narcissism and life satisfaction (Zajenkowski & Czarna, 2015). However, they discussed that individual with low self-assessed intelligence was unsatisfied with their own life. A study conducted by (Žemojtel-Piotrowska et al., 2014) focused on two models of narcissism, agentic narcissism and communal narcissism, and their relationship with subjective well-being. Both of the

narcissism models showed a significant positive relationship with subjective well-being, which included life satisfaction. Their results also supported the result of the current study. There are only a few studies contradicted with the result of the current study. A study conducted by Zagers (2016) divided narcissism into admiration and rivalry to test narcissism among different factors. Finally, it came out the result of a significant negative relationship between rivalry and life satisfaction. However, admiration is another factor of narcissism that has a significant positive relationship with life satisfaction.

The present result shows that this finding is not in line with the majority of past researchers that supported psychopathy has a significant negative association with life satisfaction (Love & Holder, 2014; Aghababaei & Błachnio, 2015; Ali & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2010; Kiamarsi & Abdi, 2008; Paulhus & Williams, 2002). These studies support that individuals with high psychopathy tend to live in low life satisfaction and vice versa. Similar to Machiavellianism, psychopathy also shows no relationship with life satisfaction in this study. This could be explained as above. The subjective well-being might respond to one's life event rather than to own personality traits, and the psychopathy traits may be influenced by other factors, but not life satisfaction. According to Rauthmann and Kolar (2012), dark personality traits are determined by their influences on oneself and others but not judged by life satisfaction. Other than that, the behavior of a psychopath was also found to have a relationship with brain functions. A study revealed that abnormalities of the amygdala in psychopaths contribute to behavioral and emotional symptoms of psychopathy traits (Yang et al., 2011). Thus, this may logically explain that an individual with psychopathy traits involved in remorseless, aggressive, or antisocial behavior has no direct relationship with life satisfaction. They involved in these behaviors may experience brain impairments instead of making themselves feel satisfied with their life. Also, the level of life satisfaction would not result in the behaviors of a psychopath.

The current study's finding reveals that there is a significant gender difference in life satisfaction, where the mean of the male is higher than the mean of the females. It can be concluded that males are significantly more satisfied in life compared to females. The findings of gender difference in life satisfaction have been put out in several studies. For example, Moksnes and Espnes (2013) found that Norwegian adolescent males scored higher than their female counterparts in the study of self-esteem and life satisfaction. Equality between the two genders exists in this modern age because they share opportunities such as education, finance, fashion, power, and more. In contrast, research has resulted that even if the actual qualifications of men and women are equivalent, men are seen to have higher

performance potential, expected to be better (Heilman et al., 1988). Therefore, this could explain the reason why there is a significant gender difference in life satisfaction.

The theory that was applied in this research was the Multiple Discrepancies theory (MDT). These findings sum up as an extension to the theoretical literature, which means this study can support the theory. It was found that the dark triad of personality, narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy, under the component of social connection, is not significantly correlated to life satisfaction. In this sense, this theory is suggested to be used in future research with a condition to narrow down the scope of life satisfaction. Factors that lead to the satisfaction and well-being of the individual subjective include physical and mental factors such as financial security, recreational activities, successful employment, religion, interpersonal relationships, self-esteem (Michalos, 1985; 1986). Life satisfaction is a multidimensional concept for humans as technology is rapidly improving compared to the last few decades. It can be said that this theory applies to the Malaysian setting, but the aspect of life satisfaction should be specific.

In terms of practical implication, this study further improves the quality of literature for future life satisfaction research. There were very few studies about life satisfaction in Malaysia, especially on the correlation between the dark triad and life satisfaction. From these findings, one crucial social change is the contribution of knowledge to fill in the gap of our society about life satisfaction.

Besides, educators will be able to identify symptoms of negative affections. Hence, new programs and services could be established to help the emerging adults who have trouble coping with life. The results of this study can serve as a framework that assists mental health professionals, community services, and policymakers in dealing with the problems related to the main variables of this study. The health department and other agencies could raise the awareness of dark triad personality as it is one of the recently focused topics developed by Paulhus and Williams (2002). Public talks and social media advertising could educate society about the dark triad and internet addiction. Finally, the results of this study add to the ongoing scholarly investigations on the correlation between dark triad and internet addiction with life satisfaction to identify the results in the Malaysian context.

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