



The incremental validity of the dark triad in predicting driving aggression



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ABSTRACT

This research tested the association between the Dark Triad and driving aggression as well as the incremental validity of the Dark Triad in predicting aggressive driving and the mediation role of the Dark Triad in the relationship between Big Five personality factors and aggressive driving. 274 undergraduate students in Study 1 and 95 amateur drivers in Study 2 completed measures of the Dark Triad (Machiavellianism, Narcissism and Psychopathy), the Big Five personality factors and the aggressive driving expression. Results showed that all the Dark Triad traits were related to aggressive driving behavior in both Study 1 and Study 2 and that the Dark Triad predicted driving aggression after the effect of the Big five personality factors was controlled, with Psychopathy being the strongest predictor of driving aggression in both Study 1 and Study 2. Machiavellianism and Psychopathy mediated the relationship between Emotional Stability, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness on one hand and aggressive driving on the other hand.

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1. Introduction

1.1. The relationship between personality domain and aggressive driving

Driving aggression is a problem in most countries (Özkan et al., 2010, 2011). Because aggressive driving has been proven to be closely related to involvement in accidents (Rosenbloom and Eldror, 2013; Mesken et al., 2002; Zhang et al., 2013; Fergusson et al., 2002; King and Parker, 2008; Özkan and Lajunen, 2005; Ayuso et al., 2010; Chraif et al., 2015) numerous research have studied the concept of aggressive driving and its predictors (Kovacsova et al., 2014; Sârbescu et al., 2014; Danaf et al., 2015; Fruhen and Flin, 2015).

In general terms, aggression is defined as “any form of behavior directed towards the goal of harming or injuring another living being who is motivated to avoid such treatment” (Baron and Richardson, 1994). Aggressive driving is based on the same characteristics as the general concept. Driving aggression is defined as ‘any form of behavior that is intended to injure or harm other road users, either physically or psychologically’ (Lajunen et al., 1998). Aggressive driving can be categorized into many types according to

certain criteria such as: intensity, form (verbal and physical) or purpose (emotional and instrumental) (Berkowitz, 1993; Özkan and Lajunen, 2005). Most research, study aggressive driving as a dependent variable. Most research studied the effect of demographics on driving aggression (Marengo et al., 2012; Deffenbacher, 2008; Schwerdtfeger et al., 2010) and the effect of individual differences, represented mostly by personality traits (Harris and Houston 2010; Patil et al., 2006; Britt and Garrity 2006; Dahlen and White, 2006; Krahe and Fenske, 2002; Glendon 2007; Jovanovic et al., 2009; Dahlen et al., 2012; Nichols et al., 2012; Herzberg, 2009), on aggressive driving. It has been shown that high levels of neuroticism and low level of agreeableness and conscientiousness predict driving aggression (Chraif et al., 2015; Herzberg, 2009; Dahlen et al., 2012; Krahe and Fenske, 2002; Dahlen and White, 2006; Jovanovic et al., 2009). Most studies that have tested the role of individual differences in predicting driving aggression took into account the Big Five personality factors, as it is considered that the Big Five taxonomy includes the most important individual differences in personality (Saucier and Goldberg, 2003; John et al., 2008).

Many researchers believe that the Big Five taxonomy does not include all important dimensions of personality domain (Paunonen and Jackson, 2000). In this regard, some researchers have attempted to demonstrate this, by empirically identifying and validating constructs that reflect the personality dimensions that are not included in the Big Five taxonomy (Lee and Ashton, 2004; Paulhus and Williams, 2002). Among the features not included in the Big Five

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taxonomy that have proven useful in predicting various life outcomes, we can find the Dark Triad. However, it is still unclear to what extent the Dark Triad represents distinct individual differences compared to the Big Five taxonomy. Some researchers argue that the Dark Triad represents individual differences which are not covered by the Big Five dimensions. Veselka et al. (2011) have shown that the Dark Triad represents an exploitative and antisocial construct that extends beyond the Big Five model.

Contrary, Lee and Ashton (2014) argue that unique elements of each Dark Triad variable were also related to HEXACO dimensions: Machiavellianism overlapped with low Agreeableness and low Extraversion, Narcissism overlapped with high Extraversion, and Psychopathy overlapped with low Conscientiousness and low Emotionality. To clarify to what extent the Dark Triad shares common variance with the Big Five traits, it is necessary to test the incremental validity of the Dark Triad in predicting various external criteria. At the same time, it would also be interesting to investigate the relationship between the big five personality factors and the Dark Triad in predicting various outcomes, such as mediation.

1.2. Dark triad

Antisocial and social aversive personality traits- traits that target failure to comply with social and ethical norms – were a topic of interest in personality research, at first in clinical samples and later in community samples (Veselka et al., 2011). Regarding community samples, three such personality traits were most often studied: Machiavellianism, Narcissism and Psychopathy. These three traits were grouped into a single construct called the Dark Triad (Paulhus and Williams, 2002). Referring to the three personality traits, there is evidence that they have important genetic components (Vernon et al., 2008; Veselka et al., 2011; Schermer et al., 2009), Machiavellianism being the one most influenced by environment (Jones and Paulhus, 2011).

Machiavellianism refers to a person who manipulates others for their own benefit. The concept originates from the writings of Niccollo Machiavelli (Christie and Geis, 1970). As opposed to the other two dimensions (Narcissism and Psychopathy) machiavellian people make long-term plans, want to have allies and a positive reputation (Jones and Paulhus, 2011), exhibiting antisocial behaviors only when there is little chance of being caught (Fehr et al., 1992). Machiavellianism is associated with violence (Pailing et al., 2014; Westhead and Egan, 2015) aggressiveness (Jonason and Webster, 2010; Baughman et al., 2012; McDonald et al., 2012), risk taking behaviors (Crysel et al., 2013; De Vries et al., 2009), bullying behaviors (Baughman et al., 2012) and delinquent behaviors (Dunlop et al., 2012). Therefore, drawing on the fact that machiavellian individuals are characterized by lack of sincerity and ethical concern (Baughman et al., 2014) and proclaim a social dominance orientation (Hodson et al., 2009), it is expected that when driving, they behave in an aggressive manner.

1.3. H1. Machiavellianism will be positively related to aggressive driving

It has been shown that Machiavellianism refers to individual differences in ethical behaviors (Baughman et al., 2014) and delinquent behaviors (Dunlop et al., 2012), individual differences which are not explained by none of the Big Five factors, as it has been shown by Veselka et al., 2011. Over time, delinquency was strongly associated with aggression (Ashton, 2013). Therefore, it is expected that Machiavellianism will explain variance in driving aggression over and beyond the Big Five personality factors.

1.4. H2. Machiavellianism will be related to driving aggression after the effects of the big five personality will be controlled

Narcissism refers to behaviors of grandeur, arrogance and superiority (Furnham et al., 2013a,b; Rhodewalt and Peterson, 2009), being closely linked to violence (Westhead and Egan, 2015), gambling (Crysel et al., 2013), risky behaviors (Jones, 2013a,b, 2014) and impulsivity (Jones and Paulhus, 2011, 2013). Individuals with high levels of narcissism perceive themselves as being superior to others (Furnham et al., 2013a,b; Rhodewalt and Peterson, 2009) and behave in an aggressive manner when their perception of superiority is disturbed and when they feel ego-threatened (Jones and Neria, 2015). Therefore, narcissistic individuals may become aggressive behind the wheel in situations of traffic jams or when their driving is obstructed or disturbed by other drivers. Moreover, due to the fact that narcissistic individuals are arrogant and have an attitude of superiority and grandeur, they may tend to protect their physical integrity. Therefore, despite the fact that they engage in violent and risky behaviors, we expect that narcissistic individuals will avoid behaviors that threaten their life or their physical integrity, such as using the vehicle for aggressive expression. As a consequence, we expect that narcissism will relate more strongly to verbally aggressive expression compared to physical aggression and using the vehicle for aggressive expression.

1.5. H3. Narcissism will be positively related to aggressive driving

It has been shown that narcissism refers to individual differences in dominance, entitlement and superiority (Furnham et al., 2013a,b). These individual differences are not covered by any of the Big Five personality factors (Veselka et al., 2011). Over time dominance and superiority were linked to aggression (Ashton, 2013). Therefore, it is expected that Narcissism will explain variance in driving aggression over and beyond the Big Five personality factors.

1.6. H4. Narcissism will be related to driving aggression after the effects of The Big Five personality will be controlled

Psychopathy refers to impulsive behaviors, low remorse, thrill-seeking behaviors, willingness to risk, anti-social behaviors, low empathy and anxiety (Hare, 1991, 1993; Paulhus and Williams, 2002). Psychopathy is seen as the darkest trait of the three, being closely linked to criminal behavior (Hare, 1993; Forth and Burke, 1998), antisocial behaviors (Jonason and Tost, 2010; Visser et al., 2014) and violence (Westhead and Egan, 2015), gambling (Crysel et al., 2013). Individuals characterized by high Psychopathy have a high desire to risk, are involved in antisocial behaviors and are characterized by low empathy and anxiety (Paulhus and Williams, 2002). When these dispositions are expressed in a driving context, they may result in behaviors specific to driving aggression. Because individuals who score high on psychopathy care little about their own safety (Wilson and Daly, 1985) it is expected that, in the driving context, they engage more in behaviors specific to physical driving aggression than in other forms of aggressive driving.

1.7. H5. Psychopathy will be positively related to aggressive driving

Recently, it has been shown that Psychopathy taps individual differences regarding low remorse, willingness to risk, and impulsivity (Paulhus and Williams, 2002). To a great extent these individual differences are not covered by the Big Five factors (Lee and Ashton, 2014). Moreover, risk taking and impulsivity are associated with general aggression (Ashton, 2013). Therefore, it is

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