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Psychopathy rather than Machiavellianism or narcissism facilitates intimate partner violence via fast life strategy

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ABSTRACT

The dark triad traits (i.e., Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy) are socially aversive and relate to antisocial behavior and violence. These behaviors may facilitate intimate partner violence (IPV) in couple relationships. IPV risk factors may be correlated with the dark triad traits. Life history strategy (LHS) may be able to account for IPV risk factors including the dark triad traits. This research therefore tested if possession of dark triad traits predicts IPV perpetration, and if LHS mediates any such relationship. Each dark triad trait directly positively affected IPV perpetration in a sample of Japanese undergraduate students ($N = 344$; $M = 19.0$ years; $SD = 1.25$; 182 females); however, only psychopathy uniquely predicted IPV perpetration. Among males, LHS partially mediated psychopathy's prediction of IPV, and mediated an indirect negative effect of Machiavellianism on IPV. LHS may account for the dark triad traits' effect on IPV in males. Directions of future research examining IPV and the present research's limitations are discussed.

1. Introduction

Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy comprise the dark triad personality traits; these traits are socially aversive (e.g., Furnham, Richards, & Paulhus, 2013; Jonason, Webster, Schmitt, Li, & Crysel, 2012; Paulhus & Williams, 2002). The dark triad traits predict a range of antisocial behaviors (e.g., Baughman, Dearing, Giammarco, & Vernon, 2012; Jonason, Strosser, Kroll, Duineveld & Baruffi, 2015; Jones & Paulhus, 2010; Pailing, Boon, & Egan, 2014). This study examined the dark triad traits' relationship with intimate partner violence (IPV), which is a serious public health problem (Wolitzky-Taylor et al., 2008), using life history strategy theory (Figueredo et al., 2005, 2006).

1.1. The dark triad

Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy are associated with the following characteristics: interpersonal manipulation and callousness (e.g., Jones & Figueredo, 2013; Paulhus, 2014), low agreeableness (e.g., Furnham, Richards, Rangel, & Jones, 2014; Paulhus & Williams, 2002), and agency but not communion in interpersonal attitudes (e.g., Kajonius, Persson, & Jonason, 2015; Rauthmann & Kolar, 2013). In consequence, these traits have been termed the dark triad and extensively examined both collectively and in isolation from one another (Furnham et al., 2013; Campbell et al., 2009; Garcia & Rosenberg, 2016; Jonason et al., 2012; Jones & Paulhus, 2014). For example, low conscientiousness, high extraversion, and high openness with low conscientiousness have been identified as uniquely related to Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy, respectively (e.g., Furnham et al., 2014; Vernon, Villani, Vickers, & Harris, 2008). Similarly, agency is characteristic of dark triad trait possession; however, narcissism is correlated with high communion and high agency, psychopathy is correlated with low communion, and Machiavellianism is not explicitly correlated with agency or communion, when controlling for the other dark triad traits (Rauthmann & Kolar, 2013). In this context, each dark triad trait's underlying mechanism may differ from the others', although many outcomes are common between two or three traits. That is, common dark triad characteristics may reflect self-exhibition, impulsiveness or sensation seeking, and cynical world view in narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism, respectively (Jones & Paulhus, 2014). In sum, a different mechanism may underlie each behavioral pattern characteristic of dark triad trait possession.

1.2. Intimate partner violence (IPV)

IPV is a serious public problem (Wolitzky-Taylor et al., 2008). Previous research has identified a range of IPV risk factors (see review, Vagi et al., 2013); for example, personality (Holtzworth-Munroe & Stuart, 1994; Weinstein, Gleason, & Oltmanns, 2012), risky behavior (Temple, Shorey, Fite, Stuart, & Le, 2013), parental relationships (Miller, Gorman-Smith, Sullivan, Orpinas, & Simon, 2009), friendships (McDonell, Ott, & Mitchell, 2010), and socioeconomic status (Foshee et al., 2008). The dark triad traits overlap these risk factors and may therefore predict IPV. Furthermore, narcissism and psychopathy are

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independently positively correlated with IPV (Ryan, Weikel, & Sprechini, 2008; Swogger, Walsh, & Kosson, 2007); however, little is known about each dark triad trait' unique effect on IPV when controlling for factors shared with other traits. This research therefore examined each dark triad trait's unique relationship with IPV.

1.3. Life history theory

Figueredo et al. describe life history theory (LHT) as "a mid-level theory from evolutionary biology that describes the strategic allocation of bioenergetic and material resources among different components of fitness" (Figueredo et al., 2006, p. 244). The individual allocates bioenergy and resources to reproduction and survival based on his or her life history strategy (LHS); these allocations are not consciously controlled (Buss, 2009). The balance of allocation of bioenergy and resources to reproduction and survival varies depending on environmental cues and genetic factors (Figueredo et al., 2006).

Individuals' life history strategies exist on a one-dimensional continuum ranging from fast to slow; their location on this continuum is measured as the *K*-factor (Figueredo et al., 2006). LHS incorporates a range of life history traits (e.g., reproductive, parental, and social behaviors), and individuals' adopted strategy explains some subsequent behavior (Figueredo et al., 2005, 2006; Sherman, Figueredo, & Funder, 2013; Wolf, van Doorn, Leimar, & Weissing, 2007). From a general and simplified perspective, these strategies represent a tradeoff between current reproduction and parental survival (Buss, 2009). Fast LHS tend to prioritize current reproduction; such strategies facilitate short-term relationships and pursue immediate benefits. In contrast, slow LHS tend to prioritize parental survival; such strategies facilitate long-term relationships and pursue long-term benefits. Slow LHS thus promote pro-social behavior and communion (e.g., cooperation), whereas fast LHS promote antisocial behavior and individual agency (e.g., exploitation). Human beings generally adopt slow LHS; however, the dark triad traits (or at least psychopathy) constitute a fast LHS (Jonason, Baughman, Carter, & Parker, 2015; Jonason, Koenig, & Tost, 2010).

1.4. IPV and life history strategy

Parental uncertainty is an adaptive problem facing males (Archer, 2013; Buss, 2009; Figueredo et al., 2006). Hence, males perform various mate retention behaviors (Buss, Shackelford, & McKibbin, 2008) to prevent partner infidelity and consequent pregnancy (Kaighobadi, Shackelford, & Goetz, 2009; Buss & Duntley, 2011). In this context, LHT may predict patterns of mate retention behavior. Individuals whose LHS is slow may use relatively gentle mate retention tactics due to higher valuation of the partner relationship (e.g., in order to promote cooperation; Figueredo et al., 2006). In contrast, fast-LHS individuals may use more severe tactics due to lower valuation of the relationship and a tendency towards temporary sexual relationships rather than long-term relationships involving cooperation (Figueredo et al., 2006). Specifically, IPV is a severe mate retention behavior (Archer, 2013; Buss & Duntley, 2011); therefore, it is expected that fast-LHS individuals will be more likely to use IPV to prevent partner infidelity.

1.5. Hypotheses

This research tested the following hypotheses. First, each dark triad trait is positively correlated with IPV perpetration. Second, IPV perpetration is correlated with fast LHS. Finally, LHS mediates the dark triad traits' relationship with IPV perpetration. Previous research has assumed that IPV as a mate retention strategy is male-specific (Buss & Duntley, 2011); additionally, males more commonly possess strong dark triad traits (Furnham et al., 2013) and fast LHS (Figueredo et al., 2006; Kawamoto, 2015), although IPV perpetration is bidirectional among males and females (Straus, 2008). Thus, the present research included female participants as an exploratory analysis.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

Participants were 467 university students from Tokyo, Japan. Some participants had never been in a romantic relationship. IPV assumes a partner relationship; therefore, these participants were excluded, leaving 344 participants who had been in or were presently in a relationship (182 females, 162 males, mean age = 19.0 years, $SD = 1.25$). Participants were recruited through their university course. Participation was voluntary. All participants were Japanese. Participants were not asked if their partner was also participating in the study in order to protect participant anonymity; therefore, some participants' partners may also have participated.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Short Dark Triad, Japanese version (SD3J)

The Short Dark Triad (SD3) is 27-item self-report questionnaire that measures dark triad trait possession; nine items examine each trait (Jones & Paulhus, 2014; e.g., "It's not wise to tell your secrets" for Machiavellianism, "People see me as a natural leader" for narcissism, "I like to get revenge on authorities" for psychopathy). The validity of the Japanese version (SD3J) has been supported (Shimotsukasa, Hashimoto, & Oshio, 2015; Shimotsukasa & Oshio, 2015). Responses used a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). Scores on items examining each trait were averaged to give separate trait scores; scores on all items were averaged to give an overall dark triad score. Factor analysis replicated the factor structure identified in previous research. Internal reliability was acceptable regarding each subscale score and the overall score (Table 1).

2.2.2. Mini-K, Japanese version (Mini-K-J)

The Mini-K is a 20-item self-report questionnaire that measures LHS (as *K*-factor; e.g., "I would rather have one than several sexual relationships at a time," "I am often in social contact with my friends"); lower scores indicated faster LHS (Figueredo et al., 2006). The validity of the Japanese version (Mini-K-J) has been supported (Kawamoto, 2015). Two items in this scale are unsuitable for use with Japanese undergraduate students (i.e., "I have a close and warm relationship with my own children" and "I am closely connected to and involved in my religion"); these items were removed in the present research, giving an 18-item scale. Factor analysis replicated the factor structure identified in previous research. The resulting scale's internal consistency was good (Table 1).

2.2.3. Intimate partner violence scale (IPV scale)

The IPV scale was used to measure experiences of IPV victimization and perpetration (Kiire & Ochi, 2015). In this research, only perpetration scores were analyzed. This scale was originally composed in Japanese; it examines the following dimensions of IPV: direct violence (e.g., slapping), indirect violence (e.g., frightening their partner by beating or kicking a table or wall), control (e.g., sending e-mails or calling many times per day), verbal violence (e.g., talking condescendingly), sexual violence (e.g., engaging in unwanted sexual contact), economical violence (e.g., refusal to return or relinquish borrowed things or money), and stalking (e.g., unwanted social interaction). Three items measured each dimension; responses used a 5-point scale (1 = *never*, 5 = *often*). This scale has been validated in the Japanese context. Confirmatory factor analysis replicated the factor structure identified in previous research. The hypothetical model's data fit was acceptable ($\chi^2(168) = 542.89$, $p < 0.001$; CFI = 0.850; RMSEA = 0.081, 90% CI = [0.073, 0.088]; SRMR = 0.060). Additionally, sample scores closely resembled