



Assessment of dark personalities in Iran: Psychometric evaluation of the Farsi translation of the Short Dark Triad (SD3-F)



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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 24 April 2016

Received in revised form 29 June 2016

Accepted 29 June 2016

Available online 6 July 2016

Keywords:

Dark Triad

Machiavellianism

Narcissism

Psychopathy

Iran

ABSTRACT

The Dark Triad traits—Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy—have attracted much research attention in the past decade. The Short Dark Triad (SD3) is one of the commonly used short measures of the Dark Triad. In the present study, we translate and adapt the SD3 into Farsi. Two studies (total $N = 523$) examined the factor structure, internal consistency, and convergent validity of the Farsi SD3. Study 1 suggested that only 20 items had sufficient psychometric quality to be subjected to factor analysis. The subsequent exploratory factor analysis suggested a three-factor solution. All SD3 subscales had adequate convergent validity. Furthermore, internal consistency coefficients of the Farsi SD3 subscales were marginally acceptable with the exception of Machiavellianism subscale for men. Finally, Study 2 supported the 3-factor structure of the 20-item SD3 using confirmatory factor analysis. Therefore, the 20-item SD3-F may be used with marginally acceptable reliability and validity to assess the Dark Triad of personality in Iranian context.

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1. Introduction

Paulhus and Williams (2002) proposed a concept called the “Dark Triad”. This individual-difference construct is comprised of narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy. Since introduction of the Dark Triad traits, a relatively large body of literature has developed. A sharp increase has occurred in the number of studies investigating the utility of these traits (Furnham, Richards, & Paulhus, 2013). The Dark Triad of personality has been successful at predicting many social and inter-personal behaviors such as aggressive behavior (Baughman, Dearing, Giammarco, & Vernon, 2012), short-term mating (Jonason, Li, Webster, & Schmitt, 2009), and workplace behaviors (O’Boyle, Forsyth, Banks, & McDaniel, 2012). It has been reported that the similarities between narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy are rooted in a common interpersonal callousness (Jones & Figueredo, 2013). Callousness may be the key in understanding why the Dark Triad traits are considered as socially aversive (Rauthmann, 2012).

Narcissism has a well-developed literature in psychology (Miller, Gentile, Wilson, & Campbell, 2013). Traditional perspective on narcissism suggests that underlying characteristics of narcissism include manipulation, exhibitionism, entitlement, vanity, arrogance, over-bearing, and self-sufficiency (Raskin & Terry, 1988). The research literature on narcissism has considerably relied on the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin & Terry, 1988) as the primary measure of narcissism

(Cain, Pincus, & Ansell, 2008). More recently, Foster, McCain, Hibberts, Brunell, and Johnson (2015) developed and validated Grandiose Narcissism Scale (GNS) which captures Raskin and Terry’s (1988) seven-factor model in a psychometrically sound manner. While there are various types of narcissism (e.g., pathological narcissism), it is grandiose narcissism that is most relevant to conceptualization of the Dark Triad.

Machiavellianism was formally introduced to the literature by Christie and Geis (1970). The construct was conceptualized primarily based on writings of Niccolo Machiavelli, an Italian political strategist and philosopher. Christie and Geis (1970) also introduced five measurement tools for assessment of Machiavellian personality (i.e., MACH-I through MACH-V). Of these measures, MACH-IV received much more attention (Fehr, Samsom, & Paulhus, 1992). Items of MACH-IV measure constructs such as lack of morality, cynical worldview, negative view on human nature, and manipulateness. Jones and Paulhus (2009) added three themes to the Machiavellian personality conceptualization (i.e., planning, coalition-formation, and reputation-building). These three themes are rooted in ideas of Sun Tzu, a first-century military strategist. These three themes have been found to be distinguishing among the Dark Triad traits (Paulhus & Jones, 2014).

Psychopathy is strongly associated with traits such as pathological lying, superficial charm, egocentricity, lack of remorse, and callousness. Modern conception of psychopathic personality roots in the work of Cleckley (1941). Self-control problems and callousness were main characteristics of his conception. Psychopathy is conceptually close to Machiavellianism; however, Machiavellians plan ahead, form coalitions, and try to maintain a positive reputation. On the contrary, psychopaths are more impulsive and this impulsivity, paired with callous manipulation,

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results in a life-time of criminal behavior (Hare & Neumann, 2008). Moreover, psychopaths pay little attention to the impact of their behaviors. This feature seems to be distinguishing between psychopathy and Machiavellianism (Paulhus & Jones, 2014). The 64-item Self-Report Psychopathy (SRP; Paulhus, Neumann, & Hare, 2014; Neal & Sellbom, 2012) scale is said to be the most popular measure of psychopathy.

Overall, the body of literature suggests that: (1) ego-enhancement goals and plans drive narcissistic behavior, while instrumental goals drive Machiavellian and psychopathic behaviors; (2) impulsivity distinguishes between Machiavellianism and psychopathy; (3) all Dark Triad traits have a callous core that contributes to interpersonal manipulation (Jones & Paulhus, 2011a). Early works on the Dark Triad traits used previously mentioned measures for each trait independently. Yet, a practical limitation was that using the well-established measures of narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy (i.e., NPI, MACH-IV, and SRP) required a total of 125 items. Even the shortest available versions of these measures (NPI-16, MACH-IV, and SRP-29) added up to 65 items (Paulhus & Jones, 2014). Therefore, recent research studies have turned to using shorter combinational instruments that psychometrically capture the Dark Triad.

There are two popular measures for assessment of the Dark Triad traits (Paulhus & Jones, 2014), i.e., the Dirty Dozen (Jonason & Webster, 2010) and the Short Dark Triad (SD3) scale (Jones & Paulhus, 2014). The Dirty Dozen (DD) is a 12-item scale comprising three 4-item subscales. Internal consistency, test-retest stability, factor structure, and convergent validity of the DD have been found to be satisfactory (Jonason & Webster, 2010; Jonason, Li, & Czarna, 2013; Webster & Jonason, 2013). The nomological network and bifactor model of the DD have been confirmed in other cultures (Czarna, Jonason, Dufner, & Kossowska, 2016). Though, Miller et al. (2012) suggested that DD lacks essential content. It has been also reported that high facet-level reliability coefficients are due to repetitive wording of items. The DD Mach subscale has conceptual issues (c.f., Jones & Paulhus, 2014). Furthermore, grandiose narcissism has 7 dimensions and, unfortunately, DD Narcissism subscale has 4 items only. In sum, DD shows satisfactory psychometric properties; however, it has conceptual issues which are inconsistent with the original conception of the Dark Triad (Jones & Paulhus, 2014).

The SD3 has been developed in accordance with latest findings in the Dark Triad literature and original conception of the Dark Triad. Four distinct studies were conducted to examine different psychometric aspects of the measure. The SD3 was developed as a 27-item scale comprising three 9-item subscales which are labeled according to classic Dark Triad traits. All subscales of the SD3 proved to be internally consistent across community and student samples (Jones & Paulhus, 2014). Furthermore, all subscales were significantly correlated with relevant measures of the same construct. In regards to sex differences, men consistently scored higher in all subscales of the SD3. Finally, Jones and Paulhus (2014) concluded that the SD3 met psychometric standards while capturing the original conceptions of the Dark Triad traits. The Brevity of the SD3 was also noted as a point of strength. Maples, Lamkin, and Miller (2014) compared the SD3 and the DD and concluded that the SD3 would yield more consistent data.

It is important to examine the psychometric properties of the SD3 in different cultural contexts, particularly for cross-cultural comparisons. Most of the previous studies on the utility of the SD3 have been conducted in Western cultures. The present study aimed to examine the psychometric properties of the Farsi SD3 (i.e., SD3-F) in Iranian context. Iran may generally provide a useful population for investigation of the psychometric properties of SD3 in a non-Western setting. We hypothesized that the SD3-F would also replicate the 3-factor model of the Dark Triad (Jones & Paulhus, 2014). The factor structure, convergent validity, and internal consistency of the Farsi SD3 were assessed in community and student samples. Additionally, sex differences were examined and, in line with previous research, we hypothesized that men would score higher in the Dark Triad traits.

2. Study 1

In this study, we provide a Farsi translation of the SD3 using a methodologically robust technique. Then we administer the Farsi translation of the SD3 on a relatively large sample along with three standard measures of Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy as well as the Dirty Dozen. We conduct an initial item analysis followed by an exploratory factor analysis and evaluation of sex differences and convergent validity. In this study, we also draw a comparison between the SD3-F and Dirty Dozen as alternative measures of the Dark Triad. Reliability coefficients are also discussed in men and women.

3. Method

3.1. Participants

Participants consisted of 301 adults recruited from six major universities in Tehran, Iran (Alzahra University, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Amirkabir University of Technology, Islamic Azad University, University of Tehran, and Tarbiat Modarres University). All participants identified themselves as Iranian. Participants ranged in age between 18 and 56 ($M = 25.57, SD = 6.68$), 57.8% were male, and 75.4% were single. In terms of highest educational degree, 77 participants had a high school diploma, 168 participants had a bachelor's degree, 42 participants had a master's degree, 2 participants had a doctorate degree, and 12 participants did not report their educational background.

3.2. Measures

3.2.1. Short Dark Triad (SD3)

The SD3 (Jones & Paulhus, 2014) has 27 items which are rated along a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly agree*). For purposes of the present study, all items were translated into Farsi (a.k.a., Persian) by two professional translators. Then, two independent translators back-translated all items back into English. Therefore, aside from the original scale, two Farsi versions and two back-translations were available. Consequently, authors and one professional translator settled the differences and selected the best Farsi translation for each item. Finally, the preliminary Farsi version of the scale was administered on a sample of 20 university students in a discussion group. Some suggestions were made and three small revisions were made on three items. Therefore, the final Farsi translation of the scale was prepared to be administered.

3.2.2. Dirty Dozen (DD)

Dirty Dozen was used in this study as an alternative measure of the Dark Triad. Response options are provided in a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly agree*). Previous studies support its psychometric characteristics (Webster & Jonason, 2013). The Farsi translation of the DD has shown adequate validity and reliability in previous work (Aghababaei, Mohammadtabar, & Saffarinia, 2014). In the present study, alpha coefficients for Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and narcissism were 0.83, 0.61, and 0.85, respectively.

3.2.3. Grandiose Narcissism Scale (GNS)

The 33-item GNS is a newly developed measure of grandiose narcissism. The factor structure of the GNS is consistent with Raskin and Terry (1988) and it has shown excellent psychometric properties (Foster et al., 2015). Items are rated on a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 6 (*Strongly agree*). This scale consists of seven subscales (authority, self-sufficiency, superiority, vanity, exhibitionism, entitlement, and exploitativeness). The Farsi version of this scale has shown acceptable reliability and validity (Atari, 2016). In the present study, internal consistency coefficients ranged from 0.74 to 0.90.

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