

# *Dark Personalities and Cyber Misconduct*

## *The New Territory*

### **1.1 The Dark Triad/Tetrad**

At first, a more elaborated description of Dark Tetrad personalities is in place. The book is about their behavior, and to better understand their role in performing cyber deviance and cybercrimes, there is a need to know their characteristics. Therefore, a thorough description of their primary qualities will be presented here. Some of this description is based on the one advanced by Cohen (2016, 2018).

The Dark Tetrad is a constellation of four theoretically separable, albeit conceptually and empirically overlapping, personality constructs that are typically construed as interpersonally maladaptive: psychopathy, narcissism, Machiavellianism (Smith & Lilienfeld, 2013), and sadism. A narcissistic personality is marked by grandiosity, entitlement, and lack of empathy (Smith & Lilienfeld, 2013). Extreme self-aggrandizement is the hallmark of narcissism, which includes an inflated view of self, fantasies of control, success, and admiration, and a desire to have this self-love reinforced by others (O'Boyle et al., 2012). Machiavellianism, another constituent of the Dark Tetrad, is associated with disregarding the importance of morality and using craft and dishonesty to pursue and maintain power (Smith & Lilienfeld, 2013). Three interrelated beliefs define the Machiavellian personality: an avowed conviction in the effectiveness of manipulative tactics in dealing with other people, a cynical view of human nature, and a moral outlook that puts expediency above principle (O'Boyle et al., 2012). Psychopathy, the third element, has been described as impulsivity and thrill-seeking combined with low empathy and anxiety (Spain et al., 2014). Psychopathy is marked by the person's lack of concern for others, social regulatory mechanisms, impulsivity, and guilt or remorse when their actions harm others (O'Boyle et al., 2012).

In recent years, scholars suggested that the Dark Triad should be expanded to the Dark Tetrad with the addition of sadism, especially

when investigating deviant online behaviors because sadism has predicted additional variance in these behaviors (Kircaburun, Jonason, & Griffiths, 2018a, 2018b; Kircaburun & Griffiths, 2018; Alavi et al., 2022; Gajda et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2023). The addition of subclinical sadism (dubbed “everyday sadism”) to the triad has been proposed, as it explains antisocial behavior independently of that accounted for by the triad. Everyday sadism is an individual differences factor that captures the predatory motivation to cause harm or distress to innocent others and taking pleasure in doing so – which conceptually differs from those high in trait psychopathy to whom this harm is purely instrumental (Moor & Anderson, 2019; Perez del Valle & Hand, 2022).

The frequently used approach, which is applied here, is to conceptualize the Dark Tetrad as being multidimensional, that is, comprised of multiple traits (Wu & Lebreton, 2011; Olckers & Hattingh, 2022). Indeed, most research on the Dark Tetrad personality in the workplace was based on the multidimensional model (Schyns, 2015; Furtner, Maran, & Rauthmann, 2017). The characteristics common to the four Dark Tetrad constructs are highly salient: They all include the tendency to deceive, manipulate, and exploit others for selfish gains. However, as mentioned earlier, these four constructs have unique characteristics (Wu & Lebreton, 2011; Lee et al., 2013). The somewhat modest correlations among measures of the Dark Tetrad (e.g., ranging from 0.25 to 0.50) suggest that each contains a substantial amount of specific variance (Paulhus & Williams, 2002; Lee et al., 2013). This does not mean there is still a debate on treating the Dark Tetrad traits as unidimensional versus multidimensional. Some of this debate will be presented in the following section. This book will continue with the approach that each dimension should be treated separately despite their similarities. For this purpose, the following sections review in depth the main characteristics of each of the constituents of the Dark Tetrad.

### *1.1.1 Narcissism*

The term narcissism, originally developed by Freud (1914/1991), was derived from the story of Narcissus, who, according to mythology, fell in love with his image in a reflecting pool. So moved was Narcissus by his reflection that he did not eat, drink, or sleep, resulting in his demise. Freud incorporated this term into his psychoanalytic theory to identify individuals who exhibit excessive self-admiration because of an unhealthy relationship between their ego and libido (Freud, 1914/1991). Since Freud coined the term, narcissists have been regarded as people who love themselves too

much for their own good (Boddy, 2011). Today, narcissism often refers to a psychological personality disorder in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-IV) or a subclinical version of the trait, often studied by personality and social psychologists (Jonason et al., 2012).

Narcissism is a personality characteristic that describes individuals ranging from those who can function normally in society to those who are clinically impaired by their grandiose perception of themselves and their willingness to exploit others (Wu & Lebreton, 2011). Central to the clinical description of pathological narcissism is a core dysfunction related to managing intense needs for validation and admiration. When individuals fail or struggle to effectively manage these needs because of extreme or rigid behavior or impaired regulatory capacities, the frequent result is several negative psychological consequences that may be characteristically grandiose or vulnerable (Wright et al., 2013).

The psychoanalytic tradition regards narcissism as a defense against feelings of insecurity, inadequacy, or other psychic wounds. While Hogan and Fico (2011) found this view excessively speculative, they contended that the dark side tendencies originate in childhood. They framed the origins of these tendencies in terms of something resembling attachment theory. Hogan and Fico (2011) cited Millon and Grossman (2004), who noted that the narcissistic personality reflects the attainment of a self-image of superior worth, learned mainly in response to admiring and devoted parents. Destructive narcissism is a reaction to prolonged abuse and trauma in early childhood or adolescence. Narcissism is a defense mechanism that deflects hurt and trauma from the victim's "true self" into a "false self" that is omnipotent, invulnerable, and omniscient. This "false self" concept refers to individuals who present a self-concept that is not who they are but rather a facade of who they feel society thinks they should be. The false self is used to obtain any form of positive or negative attention to satisfy the narcissist's labile sense of self-worth. The false self is a "fabricated personality" that serves as a defense mechanism to avoid conflict or rejection (Herbst, 2014).

Thus, narcissists possess feelings of dominance, entitlement, and exploitation and display exhibitionism. As such, narcissism has been associated with self-enhancement, which involves convincing oneself and others that one is worthwhile, attractive, competent, and lovable (Wu & Lebreton, 2011). Schyns (2015) cited Babiak and Hare (2006), who put it clearly: "Narcissists think that everything that happens around them, in fact, everything that others say and do, is or should be about them (p. 40)." Narcissism is not necessarily pathological but has an independent

developmental sequence that stretches from infancy to adulthood. In its healthy form, mature narcissism produces behaviors such as humor and creativity. However, pathological narcissism occurs when one cannot integrate the idealized beliefs one has about oneself with the realities of one's inadequacies. Pathological narcissists seek recognition from idealized parental substitutes as an emotional salve for their shortcomings (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006).

It is useful to think of narcissism as having three components: the self, interpersonal relationships, and self-regulatory strategies (Brunell et al., 2008). As for the self, the narcissist self is characterized by positive "specialness," and uniqueness, vanity, a sense of entitlement, and a desire for power and esteem. Regarding personal relationships, narcissistic relationships contain low empathy and emotional intimacy. In their place, many shallow relationships range from exciting and engaging to manipulative and exploitative. Narcissists have several additional interpersonal strategies for maintaining self-esteem beyond simply controlling others or taking credit from them. For example, narcissists seek the admiration of others. They also strive to associate with high-status individuals from whom they can gain status by association. They will brag, show off, and otherwise draw attention to themselves or act colorfully to gain notoriety (Aplin-Houtz et al., 2023). Narcissists will shine when there is an opportunity for glory, but they will underperform when recognition is unavailable. As for self-regulatory strategies, these are strategies for maintaining inflated self-views. For example, narcissists seek out opportunities for attention and admiration, brag, steal credit from others, and play games in relationships. When narcissists are good at this, they feel good; they report high self-esteem and positive life satisfaction. However, when unsuccessful, they evidence aggression and sometimes anxiety and depression (Brunell et al., 2008; Campbell et al., 2011).

As a construct, narcissism appears widely in social personality, clinical psychology, and psychiatric literature. The social-personality literature conceptualizes narcissism as a normally distributed trait in the population, for which there is no qualitative cutoff (taxon) for elevated narcissism. Grijalva and Harms (2014) mention that the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* describes narcissism as a grandiose preoccupation with self-importance, the belief that one is unique and more important than others. Additional diagnostic criteria for a narcissistic personality disorder (NPD) include "fantasies of unlimited success," "hypersensitivity to criticism," "entitlement," "exploitativeness," and "a lack of empathy." Like other personality traits, narcissism exists from high to low levels

(Grijalva & Harms, 2014). In addition, narcissism relates to other “normal” variables, such as Machiavellianism and psychopathy.

According to Campbell et al. (2011), the clinical and psychiatric literature conceptualizes narcissism as an NPD, a continuing and flexible character structure associated with grandiosity, lack of empathy, and a desire for admiration. According to the “Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders” (DSM) advanced by the American Psychiatric Association and the DSM-IV version of it, there are nine specific symptoms of narcissism (e.g., “Shows arrogant, haughty behaviors or attitudes”; “Believes that he or she is ‘special’ and unique and can only be understood by, or should associate with, other special or high-status people [or institutions]”) (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). To be diagnosed as having an NPD, an individual must have five of the nine traits. Moreover, narcissism must also cause distress or damage. For example, if an individual feels good about themselves, has good relationships, and performs at work reasonably well, they would not be considered to have an NPD. These criteria result in a relatively low prevalence point for NPD. By contrast, the prevalence of those with narcissistic symptoms (but without causing sufficient distress to cross the line into the clinical disorder) is much larger. This pattern of characteristics is sometimes known as subclinical narcissism (Campbell et al., 2011; Dow, 2023).

The trait narcissism’s core aspects are similar to pathological narcissism: egotism, low concern for others, and dominant, aggressive, or manipulative behavior. However, trait narcissism is characterized by fewer neurotic and great self-enhancing tendencies than pathological narcissism (Treadway et al., 2017). Derived from an overidealized and grandiose self-concept, narcissists experience high yet unstable self-esteem, which drives their self-enhancing and narcissistic tendencies; however, these tendencies may be maladaptive in the long term. While high self-esteem is often theorized and measured as stable, narcissism is a variant of unstable self-esteem, the general category of which is believed to explain many of the maladaptive reactions exhibited by individuals with high self-esteem (Treadway et al., 2017).

Barry and Kauten (2014) found in a sample of at-risk adolescents that pathological narcissism was associated with reactive and proactive aggression, low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, social stress, and high contingent self-worth, even when controlling for nonpathological narcissism and exploitativeness. Pathological narcissism was also associated with negative perceptions regarding the quality of one’s interpersonal relationships. Their findings showed that pathological and nonpathological factors were associated in opposite directions with self-esteem, anxiety, social stress, and the perceived quality of interpersonal relationships. Nonpathological

narcissism was also associated with perceived positive relationships, self-reliance, and low social pressure. They concluded that neither of the two forms of narcissism stood out as clearly adaptive or advantageous, although nonpathological narcissism suggested fewer emotional difficulties. Barry and Kauten (2014) suggested that perhaps the two forms capture different underlying characteristics that influence a more personally insecure form of narcissism versus a more outwardly boastful and exploitative form of narcissism, which would be consistent with emerging research on adults.

### 1.1.2 *Psychopathy*

In common usage, a psychopath is a person with a personality disorder characterized by extreme callousness, liable to behave antisocially or violently to get their own way (Davidson et al., 1994). Psychologists define psychopathy as a particular constellation of antisocial behaviors and emotions, including shallow affect, low remorse, low fear, low empathy, egocentrism, exploitativeness, manipulativeness, impulsivity, aggression, and criminality (Wu & Lebreton, 2011; Jonason et al., 2012; Lee et al., 2013; Aplin-Houtz et al., 2023). Board and Fritzon (2005) contended that psychopathy, initially described by Cleckley (1941/1988), is a form of personality disorder. With a three-to-one ratio of men to women, psychopathy impacts 1–4% of the population, about 25% of the incarcerated population, and about 30% of domestic abusers (Dow, 2023).

Many researchers believe psychopathy includes two factors (Dow, 2023). The first is called primary or instrumental psychopathy (Lykken, 1995). This factor contains facets of psychopathy, such as shallow affect, low empathy, and interpersonal coldness. Individuals with profound levels of these traits are sometimes called “emotionally stable” psychopaths. Broadly corresponding to primary psychopathy are interpersonal and affective domains. Interpersonally, individuals are superficial, grandiose, and deceitful. Affectively, they lack remorse or empathy and do not accept responsibility. Lifestyle and antisocial domains equate with secondary psychopathy. In the first, individuals are impulsive and lack goals; in the other, they exhibit poor self-control and antisocial behavior. Babiak and Hare (2006) call attention to a predatory stare and empty eyes in the psychopath that can unsettle observers, indicative of a primitive, autonomic, and scary response to a predator (Hanson & Baker, 2017).

The second factor is secondary or hostile/reactive psychopathy. It comprises the socially manipulative and deviant facets of psychopathy and has been variously referred to as aggressive, impulsive, and neurotic

psychopathy (Lykken, 1995; Jonason et al., 2012; Blickle & Schütte, 2017). Individuals with high levels of this factor tend to “act impulsively, ‘without thinking’, without giving themselves time to assess the situation, to appreciate the dangers, to foresee the consequences, or even to anticipate how they will feel about their actions when they have time to consider it” (Lykken, 1995). This self-centered impulsivity factor indicates that such individuals seek thrills, lack diligence, and are unconcerned with deadlines or responsibilities. Others have applied a four-factor model of psychopathy, consisting of interpersonal, affective, lifestyle, and antisocial factors (Williams, Paulhus, & Hare, 2007).

Researchers argue that the construct of the psychopathic personality should not be contaminated with the factors of criminality and socially deviant behavior because these elements are correlates of psychopathy rather than its core characteristics (Boddy, 2011). This fits with the view of psychopathy held by leading researchers in the field, such as Hare (1999), who have stressed that there are psychopaths who do not engage in criminal behavior and can function well in society. Other researchers distinguish between unsuccessful psychopaths, those who have criminal convictions, and successful psychopaths, those who have no criminal convictions or engage in no illegal, antisocial behavior. There is some empirical support for this viewpoint, especially from recent investigations of the concept of “successful” psychopaths (Board & Fritzon, 2005). “Successful” or “Corporate” psychopaths are said to be people with psychopathic personality disorder patterns but without the characteristic history of arrest and incarceration. Corporate psychopaths are thus opportunistic corporate careerists who lack any concern for the consequences of their actions and are ruthless in pursuing their aims and ambition (Board & Fritzon, 2005; Boddy, 2011; Fennimore & Sementelli, 2016; Cleckley, 1941/1988).

Wu and Lebreton (2011) cited Cooke and Michie (2001), who presented a three-factor model conceptualizing the multidimensionality of psychopathy. The latter authors argued that psychopathy is comprised of (1) an arrogant and deceitful interpersonal style, (2) a deficient affective experience, and (3) an impulsive and irresponsible behavioral style. In accordance with the first factor, highly psychopathic individuals believe they are superior to others and constantly engage in self-promoting behaviors. In addition, they are egocentric and put their interests before those of others. Such people believe that rules do not apply to them and that they deserve special treatment and are often critical of those they think pose a potential

threat to them. The second characteristic is the psychopath's unique experience of affect. According to Wu and Lebreton (2011), researchers have suggested that a lack of guilt and conscience are the telltale signs of a psychopath. In addition, psychopaths do not experience anxiety or fear to the same extent as others, tend to be malicious toward others, are unlikely to experience embarrassment, and reside at the end of the dishonesty and manipulateness spectrum. The final factor highlights that psychopaths are impulsive and irresponsible. As such, they are described as thrill seekers who often struggle to maintain long-term romantic, platonic, and work-related relationships. In particular, these individuals are ego-driven and seek immediate gratification for their needs.

### 1.1.3 *Machiavellianism*

The third component of the Dark Triad is Machiavellianism. Although somewhat related to narcissism and psychopathy, Machiavellianism is a trait in its own right (Jonason et al., 2012). Its name was inspired by the writings of Niccolo Machiavelli, a sixteenth-century Italian political theorist who outlined the strategies a new prince could use to establish and maintain political power (Lee et al., 2013). Jones and Paulhus (2009, 2014) drew attention to a neglected predecessor, the first-century military strategist Sun Tzu. Sun Tzu added planning, coalition formation, and reputation building to themes that resemble Machiavelli's. The strategies, highly pragmatic and devoid of traditional social virtues, eventually became associated with an opportunistic and deceptive "Machiavellian" personality (Jonason et al., 2012). Wu and Lebreton (2011) cited in their review Wilson, Near, and Miller's (1996) definition of Machiavellianism: "A strategy of social conduct that involves manipulating others for personal gain, often against others' self-interest (p. 285)."

Machiavellianism describes a personality construct characterized by a cynical view of human nature and a deceitful and calculated interpersonal style (Christie & Geis, 1970). A person not concerned with conventional morality has no interpersonal affect and gross psychopathology, has a low ideological commitment, and is willing and able to manipulate others by any means, including deceit, is called Machiavellian. Machiavellianism has also been described as socially manipulating others for personal gain (Boddy, 2011; Aplin-Houtz et al., 2023). The main characteristics of the Machiavellian personality are also demonstrated in the Mach-IV scale, developed by Christie and Geis (1970), which has been widely used to assess this construct. The MACH-IV scale is comprised of 20 items that



are phrased as recommendations, quasi-facts, or statements (e.g., “Anyone who completely trusts anyone is asking for trouble”). People who endorse such items have been found to (a) think in a cold, strategic, and pragmatic way, (b) have cynical, misanthropic, and negativistic views, (c) be emotionally detached and callous, (d) be agentically (e.g., for money, power, status) rather than communally (e.g., for love, family, harmony) motivated, and (e) use duplicity, exploitation, and manipulation tactics to push through their self-beneficial goals (Rauthmann, 2013).

Machiavellians were characterized as people who, in general, negatively perceive others as weak and untrustworthy. At the same time, their pragmatic morality enables them to follow the rule that “the end justifies the means.” The dominant symptom is coldness, implying emotional detachment, lack of empathy, and disregard for the needs and aims of a partner. Research showed that Machiavellians not only have a common perception system but also eagerly try to manipulate their partners and use lies, deception, and cheating in situations where it is profitable for them to do so and when it increases the chances of reaching their goals. It could be said that the Machiavellian can act unethically whenever it pays off (Bańka & Orłowski, 2012; Dow, 2023).

Wu and Lebreton cited Christie and Geis (1970), who argued that individuals high in Machiavellianism could be identified using four key characteristics. First, these individuals lack empathy for others and are instead suspicious of them. This tendency toward suspiciousness may make these individuals less likely to be swayed by social influence, as they anticipate exploitation and selfishness during interpersonal interactions. Furthermore, high Machiavellians perceive others as less cooperative and generous than those low in Machiavellianism. Second, high Machiavellians have lower levels of affect when interacting with others. They not only experience difficulties in identifying their own emotions but also lack basic interpersonal skills. High Machiavellians approach others with a sense of detachment and lack of emotional involvement. Thus, these individuals can approach problems logically without interfering with affective states. Because they are prone to emotional detachment, it has been suggested that high Machiavellians are less cooperative and compliant than low Machiavellians. Third, high Machiavellians possess an aberrant view of morality and are willing to engage in immoral and unethical acts that go against convention, including manipulating, deceiving, and exploiting others.

Research has suggested that high Machiavellians are less likely to help others in emergencies. Fourth, high Machiavellians focus on their agendas

with no regard for others. Machiavellians are willing to do whatever is necessary to achieve their own goals and are goal- rather than people-oriented. These individuals are not motivated by concern for others but by their purposes; as such, they are willing to manipulate others for personal gain. High Machiavellians are also more ambitious, adept at lying, seek to dominate others, and are more likely to assume control over situations than low Machiavellians (Wu & Lebreton, 2011; Dow, 2023).

#### *1.1.4 Sadism*

In their review of the literature on psychopathy and aggression, Porter and Woodworth (2006) have proposed an affective motive that may mediate the relationship between psychopathy and unprovoked aggression. According to them, sadism may explain acts of unprovoked aggression and violence. O'Meara, Davies, and Hammond (2011), after an extensive review of the literature, developed the following definition for sadistic personality: The term sadistic personality describes a person who humiliates others, shows a longstanding pattern of cruel or demeaning behavior to others or intentionally inflicts physical, sexual, or psychological pain or suffering on others to assert power and dominance or for pleasure and enjoyment.

The sadistic personality is unique among the Dark Tetrad, involving an appetite for cruelty instead of callous indifference. Only sadistic individuals are willing to pay the price (perform a tedious task) for the opportunity to harm others (Paulhus, Curtis, & Jones, 2018; Nocera et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2023). Therefore, the expanded model of the dark traits with sadism will deepen our understanding of amoral and antisocial personality dispositions, which could result in practical implementations (Mededović & Petrović, 2015). Conceptually, sadism is associated with deriving enjoyment from hurting others and seeking opportunities to do so (Lauder & March, 2023; Liu et al., 2023). Although psychopathy is also associated with hurting others, aggressive behavior may result from boredom or occur for instrumental gain, as opposed to the enjoyment of cruelty. Individuals high in psychopathy will only hurt others when it is easy and convenient, consistent with the tendency of high-psychopathy individuals to be impulsive and seek out short-term thrills despite long-term consequences (Buckels, Jones, & Paulhus, 2013).

Smith (2021) mentioned that criteria for the condition were listed in the DSM 3-R as a pervasive pattern of at least four of the following, which had emerged by adolescence:

- Use of physical cruelty or violence in relationships to establish dominance (not simply for secondary gain, like robbery).
- Humiliates/demeans people in the presence of others.
- Unusually harsh treatment/discipline towards someone under their control.
- Amusement from witnessing the psychological/physical pain of others, including animals.
- Has lied to harm/inflict pain on others.
- Operates through intimidation or terror to get others to comply.
- Restricts the autonomy of people they are close to (i.e., the spouse must always be accompanied, and children are not allowed out of the home).
- Fascination with violence, weapons, and torture/injury.

Characterized by cruel, aggressive, manipulative, and demeaning behavior directed toward others, sadistic individuals tend to display recurrent aggressive and evil behavior, as abusiveness and violence are common in the sadist's social relationships. Higher scores in everyday sadism are associated with verbally, physically, and/or psychologically injuring others, inspired by a hedonic value of being cruel (Buckels et al., 2013). There are several subtypes of sadism, including sexual sadists (Perez del Valle & Hand, 2022), criminal sadists (Owen, Noble, & Speed, 2017), political sadists (Blain, 2022), and everyday sadists (Greitemeyer, 2015) who enjoy witnessing others being injured or humiliated. Everyday sadism can be further delineated into dynamic behavior targeted at a victim (e.g., Internet bullies or playing first-person murder video games) or passive behavior (e.g., watching cage/bullfighting, enjoying stunt prank shows, or watching violent movies) (Dow, 2023).

Reidy, Zeichner, and Seibert (2011) examined 137 men who viewed photographs depicting violent imagery, completed a lexical decision task to assess state affect, and competed in a laboratory-based aggression paradigm. Their findings showed that sadism (i.e., faster reaction times to happiness words following violent imagery) was associated with a higher risk for unprovoked aggression. Also, psychopathy was not associated with sadism, and psychopathy and sadism independently predicted unprovoked aggression. Johnson et al. (2019), in a sample of 615 undergraduate students, found that construct validity for subclinical sadism was supported through negative correlations with agreeableness, honesty–humility, emotionality, and conscientiousness. Finally, Hughes and Samuels (2021) concluded that despite such overlaps with psychopathy, everyday sadism had

received sufficient support from researchers, arguing that sadism is also a unique construct that should be included in the modified tetrad of dark personality traits.

### *1.1.5 Similarities and Differences among the Dark Tetrads*

One of the issues that evoked researchers' interest is the similarities and differences between the three traits. This issue has given rise to many debates about whether the four traits should be treated as multidimensional because of their differences or merged into one construct because of their similarity. According to the general approach, the Dark Triad consists of three overlapping but distinct personality variables: narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy (Boddy, 2011; Furtner et al., 2017). Psychopaths differ from people classified as having a narcissist personality in that narcissists have emotions, feelings, and thus a conscience and are troubled by their behavior. Psychopaths, on the other hand, with their lack of emotions or conscience, are not. Machiavellianism, similar to corporate psychopathy, has no regard for moral standards and promotes the idea that the end justifies the means. It also advocates a cynical, political approach to management, including using a fraudulent persona when necessary and using force, if necessary, to achieve desired ends. Corporate psychopaths have the ruthlessness, charm, and cunning to get to the top of any organization. Therefore, it is the corporate psychopaths who may be the successful ones in the organizational setting (Boddy, 2011).

Machiavellians may also achieve success, but they may not quite make it because they lack the natural cruelty of the corporate psychopath. A Machiavellian personality does not imply that the individual lacks the conscience displayed by psychopaths, but it has broad similarities to many definitions of a psychopathic personality (Boddy, 2011). While narcissism involves excessive self-aggrandizement and psychopathy involves an anti-social nature lacking in empathic concern, Machiavellianism is characterized by a manipulative, self-serving social strategy comprised of three main components: cynicism, manipulation, and the view that the ends justify the means (Jonason et al., 2012). Robertson et al. (2016) also discussed the similarities and differences between the three traits. According to them, all three Dark Triad traits share a lack of honesty and humility (e.g., sincerity and fairness), but each trait adds additional components. Machiavellian individuals are adept at skillful manipulation and are cynical about other people. The narcissism component of the Dark Triad emerged from the clinical research studies of individuals who lack empathy and display

inflated self-worth and need for admiration. Individuals with high levels of psychopathy exhibit high impulsivity and low anxiety about the consequences of their behavior.

According to Jones and Paulhus (2014), whereas psychopaths act impulsively, abandon friends and family, and pay little attention to their reputation, Machiavellians plan, build alliances, and do their best to maintain a positive reputation. The element of impulsivity is crucial in distinguishing psychopathy from Machiavellianism. When overlap was controlled in research studies, these assertions were supported: Machiavellians are strategic rather than impulsive, and they avoid manipulating family members (Barber, 1998) and any other behavioral tactics that might harm their reputation, such as feigning weakness. The critical elements of Machiavellianism appear to be (a) manipulation, (b) callous affect, and (c) a strategic-calculating orientation. Narcissists may always be too obviously egotistical in their efforts to get promoted unopposed. Narcissistic behavior is marked by manipulation and callousness, such as Machiavellianism and psychopathy (Jones & Paulhus, 2014).

Research discussing and examining whether the three traits should be treated as unidimensional or multidimensional is not entirely conclusive. This should be considered by scholars who study the Dark Triad. Jones and Figueredo (2013) concluded from their two studies that manipulation and callousness are necessary and sufficient components of an evil personality. This assertion is supported by the fact that it was found that the latter two traits (i.e., the traits called the “dark core”) accounted for all the non-within-scale interrelationships in the Dark Triad. This malevolent core seems to be a common element in all antagonistic variables. Jones and Figueredo contended that while all malicious traits have a dark core of covariance, their behavioral, attitudinal, and belief-related components make them unique. For example, Machiavellians have a dark personality with a cold, calculating, long-term, and strategic style. Psychopathy is a dark personality with an impulsive and antisocial style, while narcissism is a dark personality with an egotistical style.

Rauthmann and Kolar (2012) examined the perceived “darkness” of the Dark Triad traits narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy. Their findings showed that narcissism was perceived more favorably than Machiavellianism and psychopathy. Their explanation to the result was that some narcissistic attributes might alter people’s perceptions, such as narcissists’ (a) charmingness, (b) physical attractiveness, and (c) relatively higher conscientiousness and achievement motivation. This could help explain narcissism’s perceived desirability. Moreover, themes such

as seeking attention, admiration, and status (covered in the Dirty Dozen scale) may be inherently more desirable than Machiavellian and psychopathic themes of exploitation and callousness. Their findings also showed that people's judgments of others versus themselves differed. While all three traits were less desirable for the self than for others, this was interestingly reversed for consequences for others: People tended to judge the consequences of their behavior as less detrimental to others than when others, in general, enacted the same behavior.

McHoskey, Worzel, and Szyarto (1998) found that Machiavellianism is associated with psychopathy in general and specifically with both primary and secondary psychopathy. They concluded that Machiavellianism is a global measure of psychopathy that assesses but confounds both the unique and common sources of variance associated with primary and secondary psychopathy. According to them, this finding provides a framework for understanding seemingly inconsistent results in the literature on Machiavellianism that has precluded its integration with psychopathy. For example, the consistent positive association between Machiavellianism and anxiety has prevented its smooth integration with psychopathy because anxiety is an antithetical characteristic of psychopathy. However, recognizing the implications of the distinction between primary and secondary psychopathy with anxiety and the nature of Machiavellianism relative to the difference between primary and secondary psychopathy erodes the mystery surrounding this association (McHoskey et al., 1998).

Wisse, Barelds, and Rietzschel (2015) found, based on data collected from 306 pairs of Dutch employees and their direct supervisors (most worked in commercially oriented (service) organizations (e.g., shops, financial institutions, health-care organizations, etc.), a positive relationship between employee narcissism and supervisor ratings of (all subscales of) innovative employee behavior. They also found that employee Machiavellianism was negatively related, and employee psychopathy was unrelated to supervisor ratings of creative employee behavior. They contended that this testifies to the importance of differentiating between the Dark Triad personality traits. One factor that may explain these differential findings is that Machiavellians and psychopaths, more strongly than narcissists, lack communal tendencies and interpersonal orientations and generate more negative perceptions in others. An interesting study conducted by Jonason (2014) on a sample of American employees found that narcissism and psychopathy were linked to political conservatism. On the other hand, Machiavellianism was associated with low rates of political liberalism, not political conservatism. Jonason concluded that political

conservatism is informed by traits such as the Dark Triad, predisposing individuals to desire social dominance.

While the previously discussed findings support some discriminant validity among the three traits, it should be noted that there is evidence to suggest otherwise. In their study, Bertl et al. (2017) assessed the factorial structure of the Dark Triad in a large community-based sample ( $N = 2463$ ). Structural equation modeling indicated that a better fit for a single latent dark core is obtained than when assuming that the Dark Triad traits are independent constructs. The researchers concluded that the assumption that the three traits represent conceptually distinct but overlapping constructs is questionable. If these traits could be best characterized as distinct yet overlapping, then modeling the Dark Triad as a three-trait hierarchical factor structure should show the best fit. However, their results indicate that this is not the case.

In addition, meta-analysis findings (Muris et al., 2017) did not yield a compelling reason to include all three traits when studying their role in transgressive human behavior. The findings of Muris et al. showed that correlations among the Dark Triad constituents were quite substantial, suggesting conceptual redundancy. Therefore, while the dominant approach is to treat the Dark Triad as multidimensional, there is evidence that in some cases and samples, one dimension represents the concept better than three. This means that, before researchers analyze their data, they would be best advised to examine the dimensionality of the concept in their specific data to decide whether they should treat the concept as multi- or unidimensional.

Later studies have focused on how sadism can be incorporated into the Dark Triad traits as an independent facet. Chabrol et al. (2009) found that psychopathic, narcissistic, and Machiavellian traits were correlated moderately with sadistic traits. They suggest that all four of these constructs are overlapping but distinct and propose calling the association of psychopathic, narcissistic, Machiavellian, and sadistic traits the “Dark Tetrad” of personality traits. Some people’s interpersonal style seems entirely constructed around sadistic behavior (Smith, 2021).

Johnson et al. (2019) found that the Dark Triad traits were positively correlated with subclinical sadism, suggesting that sadism, Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and narcissism share common elements. Interestingly, each sadism subscale correlated most strongly with psychopathy, but these correlations were not high enough to suggest that psychopathy and sadism can be reduced to the same factor. In other words, the facets of sadism still carry sufficient unique variance. They concluded that their results

distinguished vicarious, physical, and verbal sadism from psychopathy, narcissism, and Machiavellianism and also replicated past relationships between subclinical sadism and relevant personality traits. At the factor level, subclinical sadism can be distinguished from psychopathy by its facets, loaded separately from psychopathy. Therefore, according to them, their study's findings support the position of subclinical sadism as an additional and unique in a revised Dark Tetrad of personality (Alavi et al., 2022; Gajda et al., 2022).

Buckels et al. (2013) found that sadists, psychopaths, narcissists, and those low in empathy and perspective took aggression against an innocent person when aggression was easy. Of those with dark personalities, however, only sadists increased the intensity of their attack once they realized that the innocent person would not fight back. Sadists were the only dark personalities willing to work (i.e., expend time and energy) to hurt an innocent person. They concluded that together, these results suggest that sadists possess an intrinsic appetitive motivation to inflict suffering on innocent others – a motivation that is absent in other dark personalities. Inflicting suffering on the weak is so rewarding for sadists that they will aggress even at a personal cost.

Plouffe, Smith, and Saklofske (2019) examined the Sadistic Personality scale in 638 Canadian undergraduate students. Their results support the scale's psychometric qualities and the position of sadism within the Dark Tetrad. It should be noted that the sadism scale had the highest correlation with psychopathy compared to narcissism and Machiavellianism. This conclusion was supported by a cross-national study in Russia, Greece, Serbia, and the United Kingdom (Plouffe et al., 2023). Liu et al. (2023) developed and validated the Chinese form of the short Dark Tetrad scale across four studies in a large sample (total  $N = 3,181$ ). The findings showed that the four subscales are correlated but also distinct regarding factor structure and criterion correlations. This finding supports incorporating sadism into the Dark Triad traits as an independent facet. The findings of Liu et al. (2023) also demonstrate that the Dark Tetrad concept applies to other cultures, such as the Chinese culture, and not only to Western cultures. Similar findings and conclusions were found in a sample of 429 participants from Portugal (Pechorro et al., 2023).

While some researchers use sadism as part of the Dark Tetrad (Hughes & Samuels, 2021; Pechorro et al., 2023), others still rely on the Dark Triad traits (Leite, Cardoso, & Monteiro, 2023). Scholars should always consider the high correlation between sadism and psychopathy scale, including subclinical sadism, to form a "Dark Tetrad" personality (Kowalski et al., 2021;



Blötner & Beisemann, 2022). Therefore, one should not overlook the conceptual implications of the findings that of the Dark Triad traits, subclinical sadism is closely related to psychopathy (Johnson et al., 2019). Bonfá-Araujo et al. (2022) concluded, based on a meta-analysis review, that the sadism dimension likely yields incremental validity to the previous Dark Triad proposal, although the discriminant validity of sadism relative to the remaining Dark Tetrad factors still deserves a closer investigation.

### 1.1.6 *Cyber Misconduct and Crime and Its Consequences*

#### 1.1.6.1 *Cyber Misconduct and Crime*

Harmful online behavior can take a variety of forms. One of the principal terms used here, cyber misconduct, is not the only one for this behavior. Many include antisocial online behaviors (Moor & Anderson, 2019). Cyber aggression is the most general term given to describe socially undesirable online behaviors in the existing research literature; cyberbullying is usually used to describe bullying behaviors in cyberspace; and other terms such as online harassment and trolling have been used to describe malicious behaviors conducted with modern technologies (Bogolyubova et al., 2018). Cyber abuse and cybercrime are rightfully global issues, as both are associated with significant negative impacts. As Harrison et al. (2018) mentioned, online consumer fraud was reported to cost individuals almost \$1 billion annually (IC3, 2015). Online interactions facilitate online consumer fraud through various communication media. Common online consumer fraud practices include misrepresenting assets during the sale and non-delivery of goods or services.

Moor and Anderson (2019) mentioned seven popular mobile phone applications (Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Snapchat, LinkedIn, Twitter, and WhatsApp) that provide immediate and readily available social connectivity and can result in variations to negative online behaviors such as trolling and harassment, and the sending of nonconsensual redistribution of explicit images. It also should be noted that there is some overlap among the different cyber misconducts discussed here. Sometimes, it is not easy to differentiate between them. However, each cyber misbehavior mentioned here has unique characteristics regarding its usage and features. These variations affect how Dark Tetrad uses them for performing cyber misconduct as each kind of cyber application led to unique features in how Dark Tetrad utilizes it for abuse.

Experiencing online antisocial behaviors has similar psychopathological outcomes as experiencing traditional harassment, including depression,

anxiety, and low self-esteem. Unlike more traditional, face-to-face antisocial behaviors, victims of online antisocial behavior are often targeted in the perceived safety of their home, aggravating the victim's perceived vulnerability and well-being. Online antisocial behaviors are considered to be more pervasive than traditional antisocial behaviors and have a longer-lasting impact on the victim (March, 2022). There is no doubt that many of the individuals who use social media sites for malicious purposes have dark personalities. As mentioned earlier, this book focuses on four personalities known as the Dark Tetrad traits: psychopaths, narcissists, sadists and Machiavellians and their relationship to cyber misbehavior and cybercrime.

#### *1.1.6.2 Consequences of Cyber Deviance and Cybercrime*

Antisocial online behaviors are any deviant behavior (or the purposeful absence of any expected behavior) that is perpetrated online that has negative online or offline consequences for the target (including self-directed behaviors) (Moor & Anderson, 2019). The spread of digital communications, especially the Internet, has created new opportunities for psychopaths to engage in criminal activity, which may vary in the frequency and extent of damage it can cause to its victims. The most serious are disseminating computer viruses, cyberbullying, and impersonating another person or institution for phishing. However, offenses using the Internet and mobile telephony (cyber offenses) are also committed by people belonging to the general population (Perenc, 2022).

According to Jabłońska and Zajdel (2020), "Problematic Internet use" refers to a condition where people's difficulty controlling their Internet use negatively influences their social life, relationships, and mental health. According to them, risk factors related to problematic Internet use remain unclear, but psychological traits are seen as potential vulnerability factors for this phenomenon. Research with adolescents supports an association between excessive Internet use for social connection, accompanied by feeling unable to control Internet usage as "Internet attachment," and finds it leads to greater loneliness and irritability when offline and greater cyber victimization. In addition, greater media use at night is associated with disturbed sleep and depression and anxiety symptoms in adolescents (Hayes et al., 2020).

One of the main negative consequences of cyber misconduct is the damages it costs to the victims. The negative consequences for the victims of cyberbullying mirror those of traditional bullying, increasing rates of depression, anxiety, and alcohol dependence (Moor & Anderson, 2019). Hayes et al. (2020) informed based on their study that in terms

of psychopathology symptoms, cyber aggressors/victims reported higher levels of emotion dysregulation, depression, and anxiety. Slonje and Smith (2008) found that picture/video clip bullying had a high impact. This kind of cyberbullying is the most obviously public and can show the victim in embarrassing or hurtful situations. This is because of the large audience size (if the picture/clip was on the Internet) and the concreteness effect, that is, actually seeing the picture/clip. The fear of not knowing who had seen the picture/clip is also a reason for some participants (Slonje & Smith, 2008). Email and text messages seem to be less harmful than traditional bullying. This is because email bullying is not as personal since the victims often did not know who the bully was and thought the email could have been meant for anyone and not specifically for them. In addition, emails are possibly less used and less salient for this adolescent age group than text messaging and mobile phone calls (Slonje & Smith, 2008).

Revenge porn proclivity, as well as the nonconsensual dissemination of “sexts” are behaviors that are contingent on a nonconsenting dissemination of confidential, sensitive material, and the perpetrators of such behaviors can cause severe and damaging consequences to their victims (who are most commonly women). Moreover, this behavior captures the unempathetic callousness exercised by the trait psychopathy in their affinity for short-term action for instant gratification and cruel relationship abandonment (Moor & Anderson, 2019).

A growing body of research demonstrates that exposure to cyberbullying in children and adolescents is associated with emotional distress, adverse changes in body image, depression, substance use, and suicidal behaviors. In adults, there are indications that victims of such behaviors are more likely to experience psychological distress, develop symptoms of depression, and exhibit problematic alcohol use. Moreover, it has been demonstrated that victimization and engagement in harmful online behaviors, such as cyberbullying, may be associated with maladjustment (Bogolyubova et al., 2018).

Cyber misconduct has severe damages when performed in the workplace. Charlier et al. (2017) mentioned Randazzo and colleagues (2004), who report that cyber misconduct in work organizations is most often associated with a financial loss for the organization, a result of either direct theft or cost incurred in repairing the damage done to online systems as a result of this misconduct. Other reported harm to organizations included damages to business operations and organizations’ reputations. Charlier et al. (2017) contended that these cases are drawn from examples where individuals were caught and subsequently charged with a crime. There

are undoubtedly many more instances of cyber misconduct in the workplace where perpetrators have not been caught or have not been formally charged with a crime. It is also possible that many employees who are caught engaging in cyber misconduct experience a variety of organizational sanctions, including warnings, probation, or termination, rather than facing criminal charges.

Another aspect of cyber misconduct in the workplace is the damage it causes to employees. Cyber misconduct in the workplace could be categorized as involving communication (such as communicating mistreatment in the form of bullying, incivility, aggression, or sexual harassment) or the acquisition of information or objects (such as identity theft or fraud). Such cyber misconduct that takes place using information and communication technologies, such as email, text messaging, or other computer technologies, violates workplace norms and threatens to harm or results in harm to individual employees (Charlier et al., 2017).

### *1.1.7 Dark Triad/Tetrad and the Inclination to Perform Cyber Misconduct*

The rising popularity of social networking sites raises the question of whether and how personality differences are manifested in them. As demonstrated in this book, personality differences play an essential role in social networking sites' motivations and how users create and maintain their identity on them (Kapidzic, 2013). Harmful online behavior is a multifaceted problem and can be approached differently. One of the most notable psychological approaches to this problem is assessing dark personalities (Bogolyubova et al., 2018). The domain of dark personality traits is an area of investigation relating to interpersonal online misconduct due to strong links between these traits and socially destructive and malevolent behavior (Craker & March, 2016; Olckers & Hattingh, 2022).

The online environment includes various social networks, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, and Messenger. By nature, dark personalities are more motivated to perform misconducts and criminal activities. However, to perform illegal and/or unethical behaviors, one has to be capable of deceiving the other party. Consequently, in our case, individuals with Dark Tetrad personalities must believe they can successfully deceive victims into committing misconducts. The effects of the capabilities of a perpetrator are rooted in how they increase various forms of power and influence exchanges. Thus, technical capabilities may aid in some types of misconducts, whereas interpersonal communication skills may be helpful in other contexts. To perform cyber misconducts

and crime, Dark Tetrads should have the capabilities to be able to use the Internet in a way that will foster in their victims a false sense of trust so that they may gain some advantage and influence over their victims (Harrison et al., 2018).

Even when an individual possesses the skills necessary to commit fraud, that person must recognize that some exploitable opportunity exists. As predators, Dark Tetrad personalities always ensure that the environment provides the best conditions to attack (Cohen, 2016, 2018). In the case of cyber deviance, the individual should be able to identify specific applications and channels that will provide an excellent opportunity to exploit the trust of another for gain intentionally, and the likelihood of being caught or punished seems remote. The predators should also be able to recognize naivety, gullibility, or a lack of cleverness in potential victims that they may exploit (Harrison et al., 2018). This might be easier for Dark Tetrad in direct interpersonal, face-to-face interaction, but it requires different capabilities when identifying the potential victims' weaknesses on the Internet. Finally, the Internet provides predators attractive opportunities for misconducts, often resulting from weak controls and procedures that may mask the perpetrator's misconducts and crimes. For example, the anonymity of individuals engaged in multiple online transactions can increase the opportunity for fraud by reducing the likelihood that the perpetrator can be subsequently identified and held accountable (Harrison et al., 2018).

The following section will present the unique characteristics of each dark personality in performing cyber deviance and crime.

### *1.1.7.1 Narcissists*

Social media is an environment where people with narcissistic traits can meet their psychological needs, such as the need to be admired and receive constant positive feedback on their physical appearance. Narcissism refers to a grandiose sense of self-importance, superiority, and entitlement, which may direct individuals to problematic social media use via preoccupation with self-promotion in social media via selfies and other tools. Concerning cyber aggression, narcissists are expected to function well in online environments because of the shallowness of online relations and the controllability of online self-presentation. Narcissism is also associated with more intense use of social networking sites and more extensive online networks (Pabian, De Backer, & Vandebosch, 2015).

The personality trait of narcissism, which involves a grandiose but unstable view of one's abilities, uniqueness, and social attraction, contributes to

exhibitionistic and self-centered thoughts and actions in social media in different ways. The Dynamic Self-Regulatory Processing Model explains how narcissists pursue and maintain their inflated self-concept by gaining attention and admiration from others on social networking sites. Narcissistic social media users benefit from the large audience provided by social networking platforms, seeking positive feedback to recover from perceived social rejection. As a result, online social behavior, such as frequently posting photographs, status updates, and self-promotional and sexually provocative content, increases due to operant conditioning. Thus, the number of likes has become the secondary reinforcement for experiencing a positive emotional affect (Hernández et al., 2021).

Vaknin (2008) argued that to the narcissist, the Internet is an alluring and irresistible combination of playground and hunting grounds, the gathering place of numerous potential sources of narcissistic supply, a world where false identities are the norm and mind games the bon ton. Furthermore, it is beyond the reach of the law, the pale of social norms, and the strictures of civilized conduct. The Internet is an extension of the real-life Narcissistic Pathological Space but without its risks, injuries, and disappointments. In the virtual universe of the Web, the narcissist vanishes and reappears with ease, often adopting myriad aliases and nicknames. S/he can thus fend off criticism, abuse, disagreement, and disapproval effectively and in real time – and preserve the precarious balance of his infantile personality. Narcissists are, therefore, prone to Internet addiction (Vaknin, 2008).

### *1.1.7.2 Machiavellians*

Individuals scoring high in Machiavellianism tend to be assimilative and self-oriented, generally showing little concern for others and may, therefore, not be interested in serving as role models. Machiavellians showed greater concern for themselves (self-oriented secondary goals) than for the interaction, likely due to their self-oriented and manipulative streak. Machiavellians are characterized by manipulating and exploiting others, which involves obtaining much information about potential victims. Since Facebook users often publish intimate personal data on their sites, individuals with high Machiavellianism are eager to collect this information for malicious purposes at the appropriate time. This also applies to rumors often disseminated in cyberspace (Rosenberg & Egbert, 2011; Lai et al., 2023).

Machiavellian adults employ manipulation tactics, such as making others feel ashamed, embarrassed, or guilty to navigate their offline social

world. Protective self-monitoring may facilitate this manipulation and allow the Machiavellian man or woman to avoid detection and associated consequences such as loss of reputation or retaliation. Both men and women with high levels of Machiavellianism also employ self-monitoring online. The use of impression management strategies on Facebook by Machiavellian men and women may reflect a conscious effort to avoid being perceived as manipulative or exploitative. The dual nature of these friendships may increase the importance of online self-monitoring as off-line friends may detect dishonest or misleading information (Rosen et al., 2013; Abell & Brewer, 2014). Besides their deceptive, manipulative, and exploitative nature, Machiavellians fear social rejection, which may cause them to prefer online communication, where they can manipulate others more easily. Machiavellians can feel more comfortable conducting activities on the Internet rather than communicating with others face to face (Ibrahim, 2010; Perenc, 2022).

### 1.1.7.3 *Psychopaths*

Psychopaths have less compassion toward others, lie more, enjoy lying, and take more risks. In an online context, it has been found that individuals high in psychopathy tend to make unpleasant and aggressive comments to others. Psychopathy has a significant relationship with online gaming motives. Additionally, individuals with high psychopathy use social media to engage in cybersex to fulfill their extra stimulation and sensation needs. Thus, it can be said that individuals high in psychopathy desire pleasure and enjoyment by using social networking sites such as Instagram.

Moreover, psychopaths do not like uncertain feelings and are thus motivated to reduce such feelings. Individuals with high intensity of this trait badly bear the feeling of uncertainty, so they are strongly motivated to remove or reduce it. Increased uncertainty makes the person uncomfortable and motivates him/her to act to reduce it. One way to achieve this is to collect as much information about the surrounding environment as possible, which gives them control over it. Therefore, they engage in surveillance on social networking sites to reduce such feelings of uncertainty. People with high-intensity psychopathic traits will often surveil and supervise others on Facebook, with a sense of uncertainty as an intermediary variable (Ibrahim, 2010; Perenc, 2022).

Psychopaths are motivated to use social networking sites such as Instagram for social motives (achieve social benefits), coping motives (a desire to escape from pressure or discomfort from uncertainty), and enhancement motives (seek pleasure and enjoyment) (Nikbin et al., 2022).

Psychopathy has been positively correlated with many deviant behaviors on social networks, such as creating conflicts, provoking discussions that offer erroneous information to create chaos, and violating rules or regulations. Psychopaths may engage in cybersex using social media to fulfill their need for sensation and extra stimulation (Perenc, 2022). Another intriguing effect of research on the discussed issues was the discovery of the relationship between the features of psychopathy and narcissism and sending autographs to cyberspace, the so-called “selfie.” Moreover, it turned out that people promoting themselves on the web (e.g., on Facebook) show a greater than average intensity of narcissism, which also belongs to the psychopathic personality traits (Ibrahim, 2010; Bilal, Nadeem, & Saleem, 2022; Perenc, 2022).

#### *1.1.7.4 Sadism*

Any psychological mechanism that inhibits empathy would help release the sadistic impulses of those rewarded by cruelty. The anonymity of the Internet minimizes a powerful deterrent, that is, social repercussions. Hence, it is the ideal venue to unleash latent malevolence (Buckels et al., 2019). Sadists obtain pleasure from cruel behaviors, and they are even willing to work for the opportunity to hurt an innocent victim. Everyday sadists, more than others, seek opportunities to indulge their appetites for cruelty (Greitemeyer, 2015; Nocera et al., 2022), and social networking provides them with many such opportunities. Because sadists derive enjoyment and pleasure from inflicting physical or emotional pain and humiliation on others (Chung et al., 2019; March & Steele, 2020), they tend to perform cyberbullying and cyber trolling behaviors as they bring personal enjoyment and pleasure from attacking others and seeing them suffer (Alavi et al., 2022; Gajda et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2023). With the number of users on social media, it is easy for everyday sadists to indulge their need for cruelty as they have a large variety of victims to choose from (Olckers & Hattingh, 2022). Online antisocial behavior then seems more driven by sadistic pleasure than by callousness, strategic considerations, or a threatened ego (van Geel et al., 2017; Nocera et al., 2022).

Sadistic individuals might be stimulated by hurting others and seeing the victims suffer as they find it gratifying, which becomes more effortless and anonymous in cyberspace (Brown et al., 2019). Environmental and situational factors may influence sadistic behaviors. Underlying sadistic interests and tendencies can be increased, especially among those with higher baseline levels (Themelidis & Davies, 2021). A sadistic personality promotes reward-motivated (appetitive-controlled) cyber aggression



(Gajda et al., 2022). Not only do individuals with high trait sadism enjoy harming others, but they are willing to endure personal strain and sacrifice just for the opportunity to do so (March & Steele, 2020). Sadism has a residual predictor role in problematic antisocial online behaviors when included in the model with the Dark Triad traits, which may indicate that, despite its overlap with other traits, sadism should be added to the Dark Triad to form the Dark Tetrad (Kircaburun & Griffiths, 2018; Kircaburun et al., 2018a; Liu et al., 2023). Therefore, theoretically, researchers should find Dark Tetrad a more valuable and complete model of personality traits as the role of sadism may prove integral as an explanatory mechanism for antisocial behaviors in cyberspace (Alavi et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2023). It should be noted that relative to the Dark Triad, sadism has a relatively small research base from which to conclude (Reidy et al., 2011).

Kircaburun et al. (2018b) explained the relationship between sadism and online gaming in that most of the gamers in the study were playing violent games (role-playing games and first-person shooter games). According to them, sadism is associated with the amount of violent video game play when other personality traits are controlled for. Sadists enjoy humiliating others, cruelty, and deviant behaviors. Arguably, it would be expected that those with sadistic tendencies might play video games to escape into a world where they can hurt others and exercise their fantasies of hurting and killing, which they may find challenging to do without severe consequences in the real world. They may become dependent on gaming because of their need to have what they perceive as pleasant feelings. Such gamers would also want to compete and beat others to humiliate them to make themselves feel superior.

#### 1.1.8 *Research Evidence*

Strong evidence exists for the relationship between dark personalities and cyber misconduct (Olckers & Hattingh, 2022). Moor and Anderson (2019) performed a systematic literature review of the evidence for these relationships and found 26 studies that reveal these traits are related to many forms of cyber misconduct. Based on a thorough literature review of empirical studies, they concluded that psychopathy and sadism are the strongest correlates of online behaviors that are (a) the most interpersonally belligerent and (b) the easiest for the perpetrator to remain anonymous. For example, the online behaviors of trolling, cyber aggression, cyberbullying, and technology facilitating sexual violence are all uniquely predicted by psychopathy

or both psychopathy and sadism. However, these traits do not drive behaviors that are not as interpersonally antagonistic (or at least not as consistently or to the same degree). For example, problematic social media usage is more strongly related to narcissism than other traits, and sending unsolicited explicit images is more strongly related to Machiavellianism. Moor and Anderson (2019) concluded that all four traits could uniquely predict antisocial behavior despite commonly covarying with their fellow triad.

There is also empirical evidence for the relationship between the Dark Tetrad and cyber misconduct. For example, Hayes et al. (2020) found that students who reported engagement in cyber aggression showed higher levels of maladaptive personality traits and psychopathology symptoms compared to students who did not report aggression. They concluded that dark traits consistently predict aggressive behavior in frequency and severity. Furthermore, these traits are associated with impulsiveness, frustration intolerance, and lack of empathy, factors that place individuals at risk for harming others and thus could explain opportunistic cyber aggression.

Jabłońska and Zajdel (2020) found in a sample of 384 online users from Poland that higher Dark Triad traits are associated with higher problematic Internet use. All the Dark Triad's components were associated linearly with problematic Internet use: Their highest levels were displayed by respondents with high problematic Internet use. Lopes and Yu (2017) argued that the Dark Triad personalities have different motivations and beliefs that may impact the behavior they display. According to them, narcissists are more frequent users of Facebook. Psychopaths and Machiavellians tend to display antisocial behavior, including trolling and acting against the law.

Kircaburun et al. (2018b) found in a sample of 421 gamers that different personality traits and online gaming motives were associated with different levels of problematic online game use. Narcissism was indirectly associated with problematic online gaming via the escape motive among role-playing gamers and the total sample. Sadism was directly associated with problematic online gaming among first-person shooter gamers and indirectly with problematic online gaming via escape, competition, and fantasy motives among the total sample. Psychopathy and Machiavellianism had no direct relationship with problematic online gaming. Kircaburun et al. (2018b) concluded that Dark Tetrad should also be considered when considering theoretical models involving problematic gaming use, online gaming motives, and preference for different games.