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Assessing the Dark Triad using the Five-Factor Model: A Study of Assessment Validity

Video Link

Abstract

The personality constructs Psychopathy (PSY), Narcissism (NAR), and Machiavellianism (MACH) are collectively titled the Dark Triad (DT) and share a core of antagonistic, socially aversive traits. Each construct is also theorized by experts to have distinguishing features that differentiate them from the others. DT research has yielded the Dirty Dozen (DD) and the Short Dark Triad (SD3), which are self-report inventories intending to measure each of these constructs. Previous research has raised questions as to the validity and utility of these measures, specifically how well they capture these important differences between constructs. The present study compares newly developed FFM measures of PSY (EPA-SSF), NAR (FFNI-SSF), and MACH (FFMI-SSF) to the existing DT inventories using a sample of undergraduate students (N=600). The measures were compared to the facets of the FFM and other theoretically relevant criteria. Our results supported the convergent and divergent validity of the FFM DT construct measures as well as the lack of such validity for existing DT measures. Additionally, we show the added utility that comes from using the hierarchical FFM measures, which give scores for subscales as well as total construct scores – existing measures only provide the latter. The pre-registration for this study is posted on AsPredicted and can be viewed here.

* denotes Research Focused Honors Program participant