

DARK TRIAD AND UTILITARIAN CHOICES: A STUDY FROM TURKEY**Asst. Prof. Murat BOLELLİ**

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Abstract

Purpose of this study is to examine effects of dark triad (narcissism, Machiavellianism and psychopathy) on the utilitarian choices. Data is collected from university students with an online survey using convenience method for sampling. To measure research variables, a version of dictator game that presents a salary raise case to participants and Short Dark Triad Scale (SD3) is used. Reliability analysis is conducted to SD3 which returned 0.611, 0.651 and 0.684 Cronbach's alpha values for Dark Triad personality traits. Binary logistic regression analysis is used to test research hypotheses. Findings indicate that psychopathy has a significant and positive effect on the utilitarian choice whereas Machiavellianism and narcissism has not. Implications of the results are discussed and future research areas are suggested.

Keywords: Dark Triad, utilitarian choice, narcissism, Machiavellianism, psychopathy.

KARANLIK ÜÇLÜ VE FAYDACI SEÇİMLER: TÜRKİYE'DEN BİR ÖRNEK**Özet**

Bu çalışmanın amacı karanlık üçlünün (narsisizm, Makyavelizm ve psikopati) faydacı seçimler üzerindeki etkilerinin incelenmesidir. Araştırma değişkenlerinin incelenebilmesi amacıyla kolayda örnekleme yöntemi kullanılarak, üniversite öğrencilerine internet üzerinden anket uygulanmıştır. Katılımcılara diktatör oyunun bir türevi olan ücret artışı problemi senaryosu ile birlikte karanlık üçlü kişilik özelliklerinin ölçümüne yönelik olarak Karanlık Üçlü Kısa Ölçeği (SD3) sunulmuştur. Güvenilirlik analizi neticesinde yapılarla ilişkin Cronbach Alfa değerlerinin 0.611, 0.651 ve 0.684 olduğu belirlenmiş, araştırma hipotezleri ikili lojistik regresyon analizi yapılarak test edilmiştir. Sonuçlar psikopatinin faydacı seçimi pozitif yönde etkilediğini, Makyavelizm ve narsisizmin ise istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bir etkisinin bulunmadığını göstermektedir. Araştırma bulguları sonuç bölümünde tartışılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Karanlık Üçlü, faydacı seçim, narsisizm, Makyavelizm, psikopati.

INTRODUCTION

“How can I be substantial if I do not cast a shadow?

I must have a dark side also if I am to be whole.”

— C.G. Jung, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*

Dilemmas in the forms of essays or games are popular tools which are intensively used particularly on decision making, judgment, normative and descriptive ethics, philosophy and game theory studies adopting an interdisciplinary approach, having contributions of economics, psychology, sociology, decision sciences and organizational behavior fields. After the early examples known as “Bystander” and “Surgery” presented by Philippa Foot in 1967, various other dilemma cases are developed and used trying to examine choices and the drivers of them in win-win, win-lose, lose-win or lose-lose situations. One of the best-known examples is Footbridge (Thomson, 1985) in which participants are asked:

“In the path of a runaway train car are five railway workmen who will surely be killed unless you, a bystander, do something. You are standing on a pedestrian walkway that arches over the tracks next to a large stranger. Your body would be too light to stop the train, but if you push the stranger onto the tracks, killing him, his large body will stop the train. In this situation, would you push the man?” (Bartels and Pizarro, 2011).

After more than three decades of research conducted by various disciplines using variations of the dilemma cases, results indicated that as many as 90% of the participants rejected the response that require sacrifice (i.e. one herself or ones interests needs to be traded off in order to secure more) when presented with such dilemma (Mikhail, 2007). If this finding is indicating to or laying foundation of “normal” behavior which conform the norms that are widely accepted and expected thoughts, feelings and behaviors shared by the group (society in this sense), than the 10% of the people who choose sacrificial solution can be considered as deviations, although they presumably made the choice which brings the greatest total well-being for majority. Hence, results beg such questions as what is different about this minority or does 10% of the responders has different psychological characteristics that lead to utilitarian choices?

Considering the generally accepted assumptions suggesting that human behaviors are related to rational choices derived from stable and well defined preferences aiming to maximize profit, well-being and happiness, actions shall fall into anomaly category if it is difficult to rationalize them or implausible assumptions are needed to explain them (Thaler, 1988). In line with these arguments, previous research on the topic provide evidence of the link between rational thinking and utilitarian judgments (Amiri and Behnezhad, 2017; Bartels, 2008; Feltz and Cokely, 2008; Greene et al., 2001; Moore et al., 2008). Moreover, decisions based on non-utilitarian judgment and principles are found to lead to such results that are not as good as the best that could be achieved or to dangerous errors which can be potentially damaging (Baron and Ritov, 2009; Greene et al., 2009; Sunstein, 2005). Game theory studies also worked on similar questions by using various scenarios such as ultimatum game, dictator game, prisoner’s dilemma that lead to parallel results. In 1982, Güth, Schmittberger, and Schwarze conducted an experimental study named as “ultimatum game” in which one player (proposer) makes an offer to other (responder) dividing some amount of money between herself and the other player. Responder does not have the right to counteroffer but to accept or reject only. If responder accepts then both parties receive the specified amount, nothing otherwise. Although theory suggests that players should make the choices that maximize their own payoffs, research showed that proposers offered an average of 40% of the money and responders rejected small offers of 20% or so half the time which clearly contradicts game theoretical or utilitarian assumptions (Camerer, 2011). In order to examine the case further, variations of ultimatum game is developed. One of them is dictator game which is basically an ultimatum game with responders ability to reject the offer is removed. In this game proposer makes a one-time offer to the responder. Responder can either take it or leave it. First experiment using dictator game is conducted by Kahneman, Knetsch and Thaler (1986) where proposer choose between dictating an uneven (\$18/\$2) or an even split of \$20 with responder. Results of the study showed three quarters of proposers chose the equal split (\$10, \$10) which is in line with the other research indicated allocations between 20% and 50% conducted later using dictator game (Camerer, 2011).

So why majority of the people make non-utilitarian, non-rational choices which does not maximize their and/or total welfare when in circumstances such as footbridge or dictator game?

Research on the question above showed a number of variables that induce non-utilitarian choices such as moral concerns, intuitional thinking style, emotional processes, inclination to normativity (others should agree), cognition, conformity, altruism and personality (Amiri and Behnezhad, 2017; Bartels, 2008; Djeriouat and Trémolière, 2014; Karandikar et al., 2019; Skitka et al., 2005). Among them personality, particularly the relationship between dark traits and utilitarian judgment-decision making are subjected to a great number of studies especially on the last decade that showed such tendencies and behaviors can be predicted by dark triad consisting of Machiavellianism, narcissism and psychopathy with significant reliability. These findings are rather interesting because they are indicating to a counterintuitive conclusion that people who are least prone to moral fallacies are also the ones who possess immoral characteristics (Bartels and Pizarro, 2011).

Hence, purpose of this research is to examine effects of dark triad (narcissism, Machiavellianism and psychopathy) on the utilitarian choices. The study is organized as follows, after the introduction, first section briefly reviews concepts, second section presents research methodology and findings, final section concludes and discusses findings.

1. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Dark triad is a term asserted by Paulhus and Williams in their 2002 study that refers to Machiavellianism, narcissism and psychopathy, which are reported to be conceptually distinct and empirically overlapping subclinical level traits. Research indicates that dark triad exists in about 10% of the population (Gustafson and Ritzer, 1995; Pethman and Erlandsson, 2002). Although regarded as separate constructs, dark triad components are found to share common characteristics such as low agreeableness, lack of empathy, callousness, duplicity, exploitativeness and manipulation (Ali et al., 2009; Egan and McCorkindale, 2007; Jones and Figueredo, 2013; Jones and Paulhus, 2011; Jonason et al., 2009; Miller et al., 2010).

Machiavellianism is named after Niccolo Machiavelli who wrote the notorious book "The Prince" at early 1500's, reflecting his philosophy and moral approach regarding to public administration and politics. Studying selected statements of Machiavelli, Christie and Geis (1970) developed a questionnaire that is used in various experiments which showed subjects who agree with Machiavellian propositions tend to behave cold and manipulative both in laboratory and real life studies. Machiavellianism is associated with inclinations such as coldness, manipulateness, cynical, unprincipled and immoral worldviews (Djeriouat and Trémolière, 2014; Jones and Paulhus, 2009; Kessler et al., 2010). Construct is not considered as a personality disorder since characteristics of it is asserted to exist in everyone up to a certain degree which can be modified, developed and improved with experience (Jones and Paulhus, 2011). Machiavellians are also described as social chameleons that can alter their appearances as well as behaviors to manipulate people around them, seeking to obtain personal gains (Kessler et al., 2010; O'Boyle et al., 2012; Smith et al., 2016).

Narcissism is a concept coined by Havelock Ellis in his 1898 study which manifests itself with extreme confidence and self-love, need for praise, admiration and attention, lack of empathy and respect for others, being close to criticism and negative feedback, hyper competitiveness, opportunism, self-promotion, exhibitionism, and exploitativeness (Busch and

Hofer, 2012; Ekşi, 2016; Foster et al., 2009; Jakobwitz and Egan, 2006; Maccoby, 2000; Raskin and Terry, 1988). Narcissists are asserted to be socially dominant individuals who need power and control over others whom they see as inferiors (Smith et al., 2016). Inclined to exhibit behaviors associated with the common characteristics of the concept such as grandiosity, entitlement, dominance and superiority (Raskin and Hall, 1979; Corry et al., 2008), narcissists have a unhealthy understanding of social exchange that disables them to engage in helping, compassionate, charitable behaviors unless they have a hidden agenda or something valuable for them in return (O'Boyle et al., 2012). Although narcissism is a malevolent concept, it is seen as a personality type and not necessarily a disorder by many psychologists that may help achieving to goals (Campbell et al., 2000; Rhodewalt and Peterson, 2009).

Psychopathy is the most malicious dark triad construct which brought in to the literature by Ray and Ray with their 1982 study. Concept has an exploitative nature that contains such characteristics as thrill-seeking , high levels of impulsivity, low levels of empathy and anxiety, inability to feel remorse, lack of concern and respect for others, lack of social regulatory mechanisms and tendency to display unethical behaviors (Hare, 1985; Lilienfeld and Andrews, 1996; Mealey, 1995; Paulhus and Williams, 2002; O'Boyle et al., 2012; Özsoy and Ardic, 2017; Rauthmann, 2012). Although psychopaths are charismatic and skilled impression managers, in relation with their malevolent characteristics they tend to exhibit anti-social behaviors that serve as a barrier to have meaningful relationships as well as mutually beneficial exchanges with others (Hare, 2003). Psychopaths are also asserted to adopt parasitic life styles that often lead them to engage in criminal activities (Forsyth et al. 2012; Hare and Neumann, 2009).

Previous studies on the relationship between dark triad and utilitarian decision making showed that high levels of Machiavellianism, narcissism and psychopathy traits -individually or jointly- are positively related to rational, utilitarian judgment and choices (Amiri and Behnezhad, 2017; Bartels and Pizarro, 2011; Djeriouat and Trémolière, 2014; Karandikar et al., 2019). Considering that dark triad traits have common characteristics such as empathy deficit, emotional callousness, low concern for others and apathy for moral values, it can be asserted that individuals high on such traits are likely to behave more exploitatively and less empathetically which may help to explain the inclination towards utilitarian decisions and behaviors. Strongest contribution to such tendencies is related to lack of empathy which allows hypothesizing that psychopathy is the most powerful predictor of utilitarianism among all, since construct is strongly correlated to it. The weakest predictor of utilitarian decisions is expected to be narcissism which is related to empathy although the correlation is weak (Jonason and Krause, 2013; Wai and Tiliopoulos, 2012). Machiavellians on the other hand, are expected to exhibit utilitarian behaviors that serves to their pleasure since they are manipulative, self-beneficial and emotionally detached individuals who tend behave as occasion require.

In the light of literature presented above, the conceptual model is prepared.

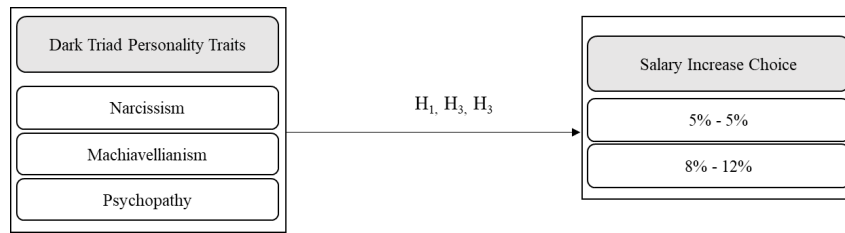


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

H₁: Narcissism has a positive effect on utilitarian choice

H₂: Machiavellianism has a positive effect on utilitarian choice

H₃: Psychopathy has a positive effect on utilitarian choice

2. METHODOLOGY

Data for this research is collected from university freshmen studying in Turkish universities using convenience method for sampling via free of charge online survey platform that presents the scenario and survey questions to participants for eight week period starting from October, 2020.

Scenario: Company you are working for is preparing for salary increases. Your manager gives you two alternatives. According to your choice you and the other employee working in the same department will have raise. Other employee does not have the right to reject or negotiate your decision. You will determine the increase for both employees. Considering that you and the other employee have the same qualifications (i.e. education, experience, seniority, performance etc.) please choose from the options below.

- a. 5% increase for you, 5% increase for other employee
- b. 8% increase for you, 12% increase for other employee

Along with the scenario above, Short Dark Triad (SD3) is given to the participants to measure Dark Triad personality traits. SD3 is developed by Paulhus and Williams (2002), consisting of twenty seven items representing three subscales. Each of the subscales contains nine items which are used to assess Machiavellianism, narcissism and psychopathy. Respondents are asked to answer such questions as “I like to use clever manipulation to get my way”, “Make sure your plans benefit yourself, not others”, “I’ll say anything to get what I want.” considering the extent to which they agree or disagree with each, using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree).

After sorting and removing duplicate submissions, a net sample of 247 usable questionnaires obtained.

2.1 Participants

Out of 247 participants, 58.7% are answered as male (n=145) and 41.3% are answered as female (n=102), all of them are reported as single and ages are reported to vary between 18 to 31 years where majority of the participants (83%) are reported to be in between 18 and 20 years old. Demographic profile of sample is presented in Table 1.

Table-1: Demographic Profile of Sample

		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	102	41.3%
	Male	145	58.7%
Marital Status	Single	247	100%
Age	18-20	205	83.0%
	21-25	34	13.8%
	26-31	8	3.2%

2.2. Analysis

2.2.1. Reliability of Instruments

Short Dark Triad (SD3) is used to measure Dark Triad constructs which is a generally accepted and validated instrument. Therefore, reliability analysis is performed directly to research variables which returned Cronbach's Alpha values between 0.611 and 0.684 (Table 2). Since all the values are greater than 0.60, constructs are considered as reliable and consistent (Sipahi et al., 2010).

Table 2: Mean, Standard Deviation and Cronbach's Alpha Values

Instrument	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
Dark Triad			0.779
Machiavellianism	3.34	0.595	0.651
Narcissism	3.25	0.536	0.611
Psychopathy	2.13	0.629	0.684

2.2.2. Binary Logistic Regression Analysis

The hypotheses of the research are tested with binary logistic regression analysis. Tables 3,4 and 5 demonstrates the results of analyses.

Table 3. Model Verification

Variable		Value
Summary	-2 Log likelihood	323.718
	Cox & Snell R ²	0.056
	Nagelkerke R ²	0.075
Hosmer & Lemeshow test result	X ²	4.853
	Degree of freedom	8
	Significance level	0.773

Both Hosmer & Lemeshow and -2 Log likelihood function values showed final model fitness (-2LL=323.718; sig=0.773). Forward Wald method is used to analyze variables. Multicollinearity assumption of the independent variables is checked by using variance inflation factor (VIF). VIF values are found between 1.101 and 1.422, indicating that the correlation among narcissism, psychopathy and Machiavellianism can be tolerated since the results are below 10 (Ekizler, 2020).

Table-4: Model Estimation Result

Variable	β	S.E.	Wald	Sig.	Odds Ratio	exp (β) 95% C.I.	
						Min	Max
Psychopathy	-0.798	0.219	13.270	0.000	0.450	0.293	0.692
Constant	1.977	0.489	16.360	0.000	7.224		

Table-5: Classification Table

		Predicted		
		8%-12% Increase	5%-5% Increase	Percentage Correct
Salary Increase Choice	8%-12% Increase	37	70	34,6
	5%-5% Increase	26	114	81,4
	Overall Percentage			61,1

Results showed that psychopathy has a negative and significant effect on the salary increase choice (Cox & Snell $R^2=0.056$; Nagelkerke $R^2=0.075$; Wald=13.270; p value=0.000; Odds Ratio=0.45). More specifically, if psychopathy increases one unit, probability of utilitarian choice (8%-12% increase) is found to increase by 45%. On the other hand, findings aren't indicated to a statistically significant effect of Machiavellianism and narcissism on the model.

The model predicted non-utilitarian choice (5% - %5 raise) with 81.4% probability, utilitarian choice (8% - %12 raise) with 34.6% probability and overall probability prediction of the model is found to be 61.1%.

On the other hand results indicate that out of 247 total participants;

- 140 participants choose 5%-5% raise (56.68%),
- 107 participants choose 8% - 12% raise (43.31%).

Taking results into consideration H_1 , and H_2 is rejected, H_3 cannot be rejected.

CONCLUSION

Aim of this research is to examine effects of dark triad (narcissism, Machiavellianism and psychopathy) on the utilitarian choices. A scenario is developed for this purpose in which participants are asked to choose salary raise for both themselves and other employee. Considering that rational, utilitarian approaches dictate the choice that maximizes individual payoff, it is expected from participants to pick the option that provides higher salary increase. On the other hand, taking into account that previous research showed evidence of the relationship between triad constructs and utilitarian tendencies, it is also hypothesized that narcissism, Machiavellianism and psychopathy has a positive effect on utilitarian choices due to their interpersonally aversive characteristics such as empathy deficit, emotional callousness, low concern for others etc.

First finding of this study is that majority of the participants choose (56.68%), 5%-5% raise which is the option that does not maximize not only theirs but other employees profits as well. This result is in line with previous dictator game studies that returned mean split value

between 20% and 50%, indicating that proposers tend to be altruistic, equalitarian and conflict avoidant to some degree especially when they feel a moral decision –even in appearance- is the best solution for the problem. The effect of collective culture can be another explanation for this result. Considering that Turkish culture is highly collective which means people belong in groups, harmony has to be maintained and relations has a moral base, participants may have chosen the egalitarian option in order to obtain and sustain status quo with their colleagues.

Second important finding of this study is analyses results indicated that psychopathy has a positive and significant effect on the probability of utilitarian salary increase choice which is confirming findings of the previous research (Amiri and Behnezhad, 2017; Bartels and Pizarro, 2011; Djeriouat and Trémolière, 2014). Literature asserts that individuals who has higher scores on psychopath measures are more likely to endorse rational and utilitarian solutions to the problems they encounter (Greene et al., 2001). Considering that psychopathy is defined with high antisocial characteristics such as high impulsivity, empathy deficit, lack of concern for others and remorselessness even at the subclinical level, possible triggering effect of them on the utilitarian proneness can help to explain this finding. Contrary to the findings of previous studies, statistically significant effects of Machiavellianism and narcissism on the utilitarian choice is not found in this research which brings into question if cultural elements are moderating the relationship or if a different sample in which participants have more work experience lead to different results.

Finally, model predicted equal (non-utilitarian) choice with 81.4% probability and overall prediction probability of the model is found to be 61.1%.

Self-report tools which have the potential of producing biased results are used in this research. Future studies are suggested to examine relationships between personality traits, altruism, equalitarianism, culture, conflict avoidance and utilitarian choice concepts by conducting field and experimental studies to establish a basis for comparison for normative and descriptive approaches and to expand the scope of this discussion. Also using a large scale, longitudinal, cross cultural research containing different age groups can contribute to the literature as well.

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