Psychological Security and the Dark Triad of Personality among a Sample of Female University Students: A Correlational Study

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Abstract

Psychological security is one of the most important psychological needs for humans and a fundamental pillar of mental health. The absence of psychological security can lead to internal psychological conflicts, resulting in behavioral disturbances, aggression towards others, deception, control, and influence over them, which are the detrimental traits referred to as the Dark Triad of Personality. Previous studies have not explored the relationship between psychological security and the Dark Triad of Personality, making the current research significant in addressing these modern psychological concepts. Therefore, this study examines the relationship between psychological security and the Dark Triad personality traits. The current research utilized a descriptive correlational method. The sample consisted of 110 female participants. The study employed the Psychological Security Scale developed by Al-Shahibi and Al-Jizani (2020) and the Dark Triad Personality Scale developed by Jones and Paulhus (2013). The results revealed a statistically significant positive correlation between psychological security and the narcissistic and Machiavellian traits, while there was no relationship with the psychopathy trait. There were no differences in study variables attributed to the participant's place of residence. The current research results underscore the need to utilize them in future studies and personality research.

Keywords: *Psychological security, Dark Triad of Personality, university students.*

Introduction

Psychological security is considered one of the aspects of mental health and is one of the most important psychological needs of every individual. A well-rounded personality is capable of forming natural relationships with others and achieving psychological balance, resulting in a sense of psychological security. The absence of psychological security can lead to aggressiveness and behavioral disturbances, reflecting detrimental personality traits, often referred to as the Dark Triad, alongside positive personality traits. Ishtiya and Al-Adwan (2021) pointed out that the current era is witnessing rapid developments, which individuals strive to keep up with, but these developments can lead to tension and the need for a sense of security and psychological reassurance. The lack of psychological security can also generate negative perceptions, leading to the manifestation of negative behavioral patterns and socially unacceptable values. Jabr (2015) suggested that the failure to satisfy the need for security can make individuals feel anxious and more concerned about daily life situations, leading to disorganized and irrational behavior in response to their fears and insecurities. Maslow defined psychological security as an individual's feeling of being loved, accepted by others, having a place among them, and

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perceiving their environment as friendly, welcoming, and not discouraging, where they feel safe from danger, threats, and anxiety (Abdo, 2016). Adler (cited in Mekheimer, 2003), suggests that a lack of security arises from an individual's sense of inferiority and depreciation resulting from a perception of organic or moral inadequacy. This can drive the individual to compensate for it by exerting additional effort, which can be either positive and beneficial to society or negative, such as violence and extremism. Therefore, Adler links the concept of psychological security to an individual's ability to achieve adaptation and happiness in the domains of work, love, and society. Furthermore, Al-Samak (2021) explained that Maslow believed that satisfying the need for psychological security can be achieved through various means and depends on an individual's personality and stages of growth. Psychological security includes three primary dimensions: the individual's sense of being accepted, loved, and treated with warmth and affection by others; the individual's sense of belonging and having a place within the community; and the individual's sense of safety or security, which includes a scarcity of feelings of danger, threats, and despair. Al-Aswad and Abu Khalid (2022) emphasized that psychological security is the hidden energy that surrounds an individual, guiding their thoughts and capabilities. When there is a disruption in this source of energy, it affects the individual as a whole.

Previous studies on psychological security have shown diverse results. For instance, the study by Zhang and Liu (2015) indicated that the level of psychological security among urban residents in Beijing is moderate. It also found that individuals with higher monthly incomes and higher education levels tend to have higher psychological security. Similarly, a study by Jabr (2015) revealed that students in the College of Fine Arts at the University of Babylon exhibit a high level of psychological security, with statistically significant gender-based differences in favor of females. Additionally, the study conducted by Al-Shahibi and Al-Jizani (2020) demonstrated that the elevated level of psychological security among students at Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University is attributed to the security and safety prevailing in Saudi society. Another study by Mahmoud (2021) found a negative correlation between cyberbullying and psychological security among university students. It also identified differences in cyberbullying and psychological security related to the place of residence, favoring urban areas. As stated by Al-Aswad and Abu Khalid (2022), the absence of a sense of psychological security can lead to the occurrence of psychological disorders or aggressive behavior towards sources that frustrate an individual's need for security. It may result in the adoption of unhealthy behavioral patterns. Furthermore, the study emphasized the significant role of unfavorable environmental conditions in developing high levels of anxiety among individuals. In summary, these studies shed light on the multifaceted nature of psychological security and its connection to various factors, such as income, education, gender, and environmental conditions, underlining the importance of understanding and promoting psychological security in different contexts.

Various theories have sought to explain psychological security, including Sullivan's personality theory, as discussed by Ahmed et al. (2018). Sullivan's theory establishes a connection between biological, genetic, psychological, and social factors and their role in shaping an individual's personality, motives, and instincts. When an individual successfully satisfies their needs in accordance with societal norms, they experience a sense of security and self-identity. Conversely, if they fail to meet their needs, they suffer from feelings of psychological insecurity. This theory posits that every aspect of human behavior is contingent upon an individual's pursuit of security, which can drive them to either the extremes of mental health or illness. It also underscores that interpersonal relationships are dynamic attachment relationships that significantly influence one's personality. Furthermore, Zotova and Karapetyan (2018) emphasized that the need for security directs human behavior, and individuals experience stress when genuine threats to their life, health, and well-being become evident. In light of this, all facets of human behavior can be interpreted within the context of genuine feelings of security and safety.

As evident from the preceding discussion, an individual seeking to fulfill their need for security, when confronted with challenges that threaten their life, may resort to deceiving and exerting control over others using alluring methods, coupled with boldness, aggression, a lack of conscience, and a lack of empathy toward others to pursuit their personal goals. These are detrimental personality traits. Given that personality encompasses both positive and negative traits, the current research will primarily focus on exploring the detrimental personality traits collectively referred to as the Dark Triad of Personality. The Dark Triad of Personality, as defined by Jones and Paulhus (2013), is a constellation of three detrimental personality traits. Machiavellianism denotes a manipulative or deceitful personality that is driven by a desire to achieve personal objectives through any means necessary. Narcissism includes characteristics related to feelings of grandiosity, a desire for control, and a belief in one's superiority. Psychopathy is associated with heightened impulsivity, a propensity to seek excitement a low level of anxiety, and a lack of empathy towards others. Szabo and Jones (2019) explained that the three traits of the Dark Triad in personality share a common characteristic of reduced empathy towards others. However, individuals characterized by narcissism and psychopathy tend to focus on short-term goals, while Machiavellian individuals plan for long-term objectives. Results from Brewer et al.'s (2020) study revealed that Machiavellian individuals exhibit behaviors such as lying, cheating, deceiving, selfishness, a lack of empathy for others, and a charming and attractive facade to conceal their hypocrisy and manipulate others to achieve their personal goals. On the other hand, results from Pilch's (2020) study suggested that narcissistic individuals attempt to display positive emotions in the presence of others to capture their attention and admiration, aiming to gain support for their own opinions.

Prior research on the Dark Triad of Personality has been diverse, with studies such as Paulhus and Williams (2002) showing that males scored higher on the Dark Triad personality traits. Knight et al.'s (2018) study found that pathological images of narcissism and psychopathy were predictive of aggression, particularly reactive aggression in relationships. Conversely, narcissism involving a sense of vulnerability and psychopathy was positively predictive of aggression in relationships, while grandiose narcissism had a negative predictive effect on aggression among university students. A study by Revital et al. (2022) revealed that psychopathy and Machiavellianism are closely situated in the personality space, sharing a common origin, and the Dark Triad is positively associated with aggression. Furthermore, Taha's (2022) study indicated the potential for predicting the Dark Triad of Personality from emotional regulation difficulties and moral disengagement. Goodboy and Martin's (2015) study demonstrated a positive correlation between the three Dark Triad personality traits and cyberbullying among university students. Mahmoud's (2021) research showed that urban university students were more likely to engage in cyberbullying and had a lower sense of psychological security compared to rural students. Fadel and Bukard's (2023) work emphasized the increase in cyberbullying and its impact on various aspects of a university student's life due to their lack of psychological security, which is considered a vital necessity for their well-being.

As highlighted in the previous discussion, psychological security is one of the most crucial psychological needs of humans and a fundamental pillar of mental well-being. It is a distinctive characteristic of healthy behavior, enabling individuals to have positive attitudes toward themselves, others, and life. The absence of psychological security can lead to internal psychological conflicts, resulting in behavioral disturbances, reduced self-esteem, decreased self-confidence, aggression towards others, harming them, bullying, deceit, control, and influence. These harmful traits are referred to as the Dark Triad personality traits.

Some previous studies have revealed a connection between the Dark Triad and cyberbullying. Similarly, research has established a link between psychological security

and cyberbullying among university students. However, to the best of my knowledge, there has not been any study that has explored the relationship between psychological security and the Dark Triad of Personality traits. It was also observed that university students residing in urban areas have a lower sense of psychological security. These observations led to the idea for the current study, which aims to investigate the relationship between psychological security and the Dark Triad of Personality traits among female students at King Khalid University in Saudi Arabia. The study also aims to identify differences in psychological security and the Dark Triad of Personality traits concerning the variable of residence (village/city). Additionally, it seeks to determine the relative contribution of personality traits (Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy) in predicting psychological security in the current research sample.

The research problem can be formulated as answering the main question: What is the correlational relationship between psychological security and the Dark Triad? The current research aimed to address the following hypotheses:

1.   There are no statistically significant differences between the hypothetical mean and the mean scores of female students on the Psychological Security Scale.

2.   There are no statistically significant differences between the hypothetical mean and the mean scores of female students on the Dark Triad of Personality scale.

3.   There are no statistically significant differences in psychological security and the Dark Triad of Personality based on the residence variable (village/city) among a sample of female students at King Khalid University.

4.   The relative contribution of the Dark Triad personality traits (Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy) in predicting psychological security among a sample of female students at King Khalid University varies.

The significance of this research lies in the modern psychological literature's focus on the Dark Triad of Personality and its ability to predict psychological security. Furthermore, this study's significance is underscored by the integration of multiple research variables that have not been collectively examined before. From an applied perspective, the research findings can inform therapists and counselors in developing treatment plans and guidance programs to enhance psychological security and modify personality traits among university students. The implications of this research will extend to future studies and research endeavors in the field of personality.

Methods

The current research relied on the descriptive correlational methodology due to its suitability for the nature of this study. The sample consisted of (110) female volunteers from the College of Education at the Department of Psychology, with ages ranging from 18 to 26 years, an average age of 23.81 years, and a standard deviation of 3.62. The study was approved by the ethics committee at King Khalid University in Saudi Arabia, and the study instruments were applied to these volunteer students during the academic year 2023. The psychometric properties of these instruments were verified on a pilot sample of (67) students of the same age. The instruments used in this study included the Psychological Security Scale developed by Al-Shuhaibi and Al-Jizani (2020). This scale consists of 20 statements, including ten positive and ten negative items, rated on a three-point scale (Not Applicable = 1, Sometimes = 2, Completely Applicable = 3). The minimum score is 20, indicating a low level of psychological security, and the maximum score is 60, indicating a high level of psychological security. The scale's developers calculated the reliability and validity coefficients, with values of 0.76 for reliability and 0.765 for validity, indicating high reliability and validity of the Psychological Security Scale. The psychometric properties of the research materials, such as the Psychological

Security Scale, were verified through validity and reliability measures using various statistical methods, including internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha, split-half reliability, and Guttman.

First: the Pearson correlation coefficient was used to assess the internal consistency validity. In this method, the correlation coefficient value was calculated between each item in the scale and the total score of the Psychological Security Scale. Table 1 illustrates this:

Table 1. Correlation coefficients of each item in the scale with the total score of the Psychological Security Scale (n=67)

Item	Correlation coefficient	Sig.	Item	Correlation coefficient	Sig.	Item	Correlation coefficient	Sig.
1	.125	.315	7	.223	.070	14	.446**	.000
2	.396**	.001	8	.248*	.043	15	.476**	.000
3	.035	.779	9	.364**	.002	16	.444**	.000
4	.177	.152	10	.361**	.003	17	.522**	.000
5	.192	.119	11	.528**	.000	18	.438**	.000
6	.297*	.297*	12	.552**	.000	19	.366**	.002
		0.01	13	.465**	.000	20	.553**	.000

**sig. at (0.01), *sig. at (0.05).

It is evident from Table 1 that the correlation coefficients between each item and the total score of the Psychological Security Scale were statistically significant at the 0.01 and 0.05 levels. The result confirms that all the scale items are associated with the total score of the scale, albeit with varying degrees of correlation, indicating the scale's validity.

Second: To assess the reliability of the Psychological Security Scale, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient and split-half reliability coefficient were calculated using Spearman-Brown's and Guttman's formulas. Table 2 illustrates the results.

Table 2: Reliability coefficients using Cronbach's Alpha, split-half, and Guttman's split-half for the Psychological Security Scale (n=67)

Scale	No. of items	Cronbach's Alpha	Split-half	Guttman
Psychological Security	20	.662	-1.012	-.941

It is evident from Table 2 that the values of Cronbach Alpha, the split-half (Spearman-Brown's formula), and the split-half (Guttman's formula) were high, indicating acceptable reliability for the Psychological Security Scale. It is worth mentioning that the scale encompasses both positive and negative items, demonstrating a high level of consistency.

The Dark Triad Personality Scale, developed by Jones and Paulhus (2013), comprises three socially aversive traits: Machiavellianism, Narcissism, and Psychopathy, collectively referred to as the Dark Triad of Personality. This scale includes three primary dimensions, each with nine items, totaling 27 items. Participants rate these items on a graded scale with values ranging from 5 (Strongly Agree) to 1 (Strongly Disagree). A score of 27 reflects lower levels of Dark Triad traits, while a score of 135 indicates higher levels. The scale's psychometric properties were established by its creators, confirming its validity, reliability, effectiveness, and suitability for assessing the Dark Triad of Personality. In the present study, the scale's psychometric properties were assessed by the

coefficient of internal consistency (Cronbach's Alpha), the split-half reliability (Spearman-Brown's Formula), and the split-half reliability (Guttman's Formula).

First: To verify the internal consistency, the Pearson correlation coefficient was used. In this method, the correlation coefficient between the score of each item and the total score of the respective dimension within the Dark Triad personality scale was calculated, as well as the correlation coefficient between the dimensions themselves and the total score of the scale. Table 3 and 4 illustrate the results.

Table 3. Correlation coefficients of each item with the total score of the respective dimension in the Dark Triad Personality Scale (n=67)

Machiavellianism		Narcissism		Psychopathy	
No. of item	Correlation coefficient (R)	No. of item	Correlation coefficient (R)	No. of item	Correlation coefficient (R)
1	.335**	10	.507**	19	.422**
2	.674**	11	.696**	20	.291*
3	.344**	12	.751**	21	.622**
4	.638**	13	.732**	22	.664**
5	.579**	14	.596**	23	.587**
6	.609**	15	.400**	24	.651**
7	.282*	16	.572**	25	.352**
8	.417**	17	.547**	26	.470**
9	.444**	18	.468**	27	.527**

**sig. at (0.01), *sig. at (0.05).

The results from Table 3 indicate that all correlation coefficients between each item and the score of the respective dimension were statistically significant at the (0.01) and (0.05) significance levels, with values ranging from 0.282 to 0.751. These high values suggest the reliability of the scale.

Table 4. Matrix of correlation coefficients between the dimensions themselves and between the dimensions and the total score of the Dark Triad Personality Scale (n=67)

Dimension	Machiavellianism	Narcissism	Psychopathy	Total
Machiavellianism	-			
Narcissism	.596**	-		
Psychopathy	.478**	.615**	-	
Total	.795**	.896**	.832**	-

**sig. at (0.01)

The data in Table 4 indicates that all the correlation coefficients between the dimensions of the scale and each other, as well as the total score of the scale, were significant at the 0.01 level. The values ranged from 0.478 to 0.896, confirming the validity of the Dark Triad personality scale.

Second: To assess the reliability of the Dark Triad personality scale, Cronbach's alpha coefficient and split-half reliability were calculated using Spearman-Brown's and Guttman's formulas. Table 5 illustrates the results.

Table 5. Reliability coefficients using Cronbach's alpha and split-half reliability and Guttman formula for the Dark Triad personality scale (N=67)

Dimension	No. of items	Cronbach's Alpha	Split-half	Guttman
Machiavellianism	9	.598	.543	.525
Narcissism	9	.751	.683	.661
Psychopathy	9	.648	.751	.746
Total	27	.845	.796	.795

It is evident from Table 5 that the values of Cronbach's alpha, split-half reliability, and Guttman's coefficient were high and acceptable, indicating that the scale exhibits a high degree of reliability.

Results

First hypothesis: There are no statistically significant differences between the hypothetical mean and the mean scores of female students on the Psychological Security Scale.

To verify the validity of this hypothesis, the significance of the differences between the sample mean and the hypothetical population mean on the Psychological Security Scale was calculated using a one-sample "t" test. Table 6 presents the results.

Table 6. Results of a one-sample t-test for differences between the experimental mean and the hypothetical mean on the Psychological Security Scale (n=110)

Scale	No. of items	Mean	Standard deviation	t	df	Sig.	Level
Psychological Security	20	43.7727	4.27851	9.248	109	.000	High

Table 6 indicates statistically significant differences between the hypothetical mean and the experimental mean on the Psychological Security Scale for individuals in the current research sample in favor of the sample mean. This suggests the rejection of the null hypothesis and acceptance of the alternative hypothesis.

Second hypothesis: There are no statistically significant differences between the hypothetical mean and the mean scores of female students on the Dark Triad of Personality scale.

To verify the validity of this hypothesis, the significance of the differences between the hypothetical mean of the scale and the sample mean on the Dark Triad Personality Scale was calculated using a one-sample "t" test. Table 7 displays the results.

Table 7. Results of a one-sample t-test for differences between the experimental mean and the hypothetical mean on the Dark Triad Personality Scale (n=110)

Dimension	No. of items	Mean	Standard deviation	t	df	Sig.	Rank	Level
Machiavellianism	9	30.15	4.75	6.939	109	.000	1	High
Narcissism	9	26.30	5.82	-1.262	109	.210	3	Medium
Psychopathy	9	24.02	4.94	- 6.333	109	.000	2	Medium

Table 7 shows statistically significant differences between the hypothetical mean and the experimental mean of the current research sample. This significance is evident through the t-test at a significance level of (0.000) in favor of the sample individuals in the Machiavellianism dimension. The experimental mean for responses from the research sample participants (30.15) is higher than the hypothetical mean in the Machiavellianism dimension. For the Narcissism dimension, the experimental mean was (26.30), lower than the hypothetical mean of 27. Lastly, in the Psychopathy dimension, the experimental mean is (24.02), also lower than the hypothetical mean. The order of the dimensions in terms of level is Machiavellianism, followed by Narcissism, and lastly Psychopathy.

Third hypothesis: There are no statistically significant differences in psychological security and the Dark Triad of Personality based on the residence variable (village/city) among a sample of female students at King Khalid University.

To verify the validity of this hypothesis, an independent samples t-test was used. Table 8 and 9 illustrate the results.

Table 8. The significance of differences in the mean score of psychological security in the research sample attributed to the place of residence (n=110)

Variable	Category	No.	Mean	Standard deviation	t	Sig.
Psychological security	City	87	43.8046	4.43778	-.151	.880
	Village	23	43.6522	3.70023		

The data from Table 8 reveals no statistically significant differences in the mean score of psychological security (positive and negative statements) among the current research sample's female students attributed to their place of residence. The t-value (-.151) was non-significant, indicating the absence of differences in the sense of psychological security among female students living in city or village areas.

Table 9. The significance of differences in the mean scores of the Dark Triad Personality traits in the research sample attributed to the place of residence (n=110)

The Dark Triad of Personality	City (no.87)		Village (no. 23)		t	Sig.
	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation		
Machiavellianism	30.0920	4.77550	30.3478	4.77311	.229	.820
Narcissism	26.4828	5.91777	25.6087	5.49991	-.639	.524
Psychopathy	23.9540	5.20266	24.2609	3.86379	.264	.792

The data from Table 9 reveals no statistically significant differences in the mean scores of the Dark Triad Personality traits among the current research sample's female students attributed to their place of residence. The t-values ranged from (.639 to .264), and they are non-significant. This result indicates the absence of differences in the Dark Triad personality traits among female students living in urban or rural areas.

Fourth hypothesis: The relative contribution of the Dark Triad personality traits (Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy) in predicting psychological security among a sample of female students at King Khalid University varies.

To test the validity of this hypothesis, the Pearson correlation coefficient was used to assess the relationship between psychological security and the Dark Triad of Personality (both dimensions and the total score). Then, multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the extent to which the Dark Triad personality traits contribute to predicting psychological security. The following tables present the results.

Table 10. The relationship between psychological security and the Dark Triad of Personality in the research sample (n=110)

Dark Triad of Personality	Psychological security	
	Pearson correlation coefficient	Sig.
Machiavellianism	.220[*]	.021
Narcissism	.265[**]	.005
Psychopathy	.146	.129

**sig. at (0.01), *sig. at (0.05).

The data from Table 10 reveals a statistically significant positive relationship between psychological security and the Narcissism dimension at a significance level of 0.01, with a correlation coefficient of 0.265. Additionally, a statistically significant positive relationship was found between psychological security and the Machiavellianism dimension at a significance level of 0.05, with a correlation coefficient of 0.220. However, there was no statistically significant relationship between psychological security and the Psychopathy dimension in the current research sample. The level of psychological security can be predicted through the Narcissism and Machiavellianism dimensions, but not through the Psychopathy dimension. To assess the possibility of predicting psychological security through the Dark Triad of Personality dimensions, multiple linear regression analysis was conducted, with students' performance on both scales (psychological security and the Dark Triad of Personality) as input. Psychological security was considered the dependent variable (predicted), and the Dark Triad of Personality served as the independent variable (predictors). Table 11, 12, and 13 provide the results of the regression analysis.

Table 11. Study variables

Variable	Psychological security	Machiavellianism	Narcissism	Psychopathy
Type	Dependent	Independent	Independent	Independent

After conducting multiple regression analysis using the stepwise regression method, the dimensions of Machiavellianism and Narcissism were found to be statistically significant, while the Psychopathy dimension was excluded. Thus, Machiavellianism and Narcissism are the two dimensions capable of contributing to predicting psychological security. Table 12 illustrates the results.

Table 12. Analysis of Variance for the Regression of Machiavellianism and Narcissism on Psychological Security

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	140.641	1	140.641	8.190	.005[b]
Residual	1854.677	108	17.173		
Total	1995.318	109			

The data from Table 12 reveals a statistically significant effect of the Narcissism dimension on psychological security, with an F-value of 8.190, which is statistically significant. This result indicates that Narcissism predicts psychological security. However, there was no significant effect of the Machiavellianism dimension, as it was excluded from the analysis, explaining only a very low variance in psychological security.

Table 13. Results of multiple regression analysis for the narcissism dimension on psychological security

Model	B	Std. Error	B Beta	T	Sig.	R	%
(Constant)	38.639	1.837		21.035	.000	.265[a]	26,5 %
Narcissism	.195	.068	.265	2.862	.005		

Psychological Security Score $= 38.639 + 0.195 \times$ Narcissism Score

The data from Table 13 indicates that the significance level is less than 0.05, making it statistically significant. This result suggests that the Narcissism dimension contributes to predicting psychological security with an effect size of 26.5%. In other words, a one-unit change in Narcissism corresponds to a change in psychological security by 0.195 units, statistically significant.

Discussion

The results of the first hypothesis can be interpreted as follows: Female students at King Khalid University in Saudi Arabia have a high level of psychological security, as the experimental mean is higher than the hypothetical mean. This result implies statistically significant differences in favor of the experimental mean of the current sample's responses. The result is attributed to the security and safety that Saudi society enjoys and reflects on the sense of psychological security among all its members. This result aligns with studies by Zhang and Liu (2015) and Al-Shuhaibi and Al-Jizani (2020), which have suggested that higher levels of psychological security are associated with higher income, higher education, and the security and safety prevalent in Saudi society.

The second hypothesis can be explained by the presence of a high level of Machiavellianism among the current sample, where individuals focus on their goals and present themselves attractively to influence others in order to achieve their personal goals. Additionally, there is a moderate level of narcissism among them. They may display positive emotions to attract the attention and approval of others. The sample also exhibits a lower level of psychopathy, which occasionally manifests as boldness and impulsivity to achieve their personal goals. This result is consistent with Pilch's (2020) study, suggesting that narcissistic individuals display positive emotions in the presence of others to gain their attention and approval. The current result is different from the findings of Paulhus and Williams (2002), who reported high scores for all three dark triad personality traits, and Knight et al. (2018), who suggested that the dark triad traits, particularly narcissism and psychopathy, predict aggression. The current study's results indicate that narcissism predicts psychological security, reflecting the absence of aggression associated with psychopathy.

The third hypothesis can be explained by the high level of psychological security among female students at King Khalid University due to the security and safety prevalent throughout the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Additionally, the presence of some dark triad personality traits does not affect them negatively, as these traits are expressed in a healthy form. Their place of residence, whether in a city or a village, does not affect their psychological security. They lead a healthy and mentally affluent life in Saudi society, which provides them with pride, self-esteem, and a comfortable life.

The fourth hypothesis can be explained by the narcissistic tendencies of the sample, which manifest in their positive emotions towards others and their desire to control and excel academically, thus gaining approval for their personal opinions. It is worth noting that narcissism is characterized by self-love and self-preference over others. This result is reflected in the sample's sense of control over their lives and the ability to make significant decisions. The result demonstrates their psychological security, stemming from a sense of safety and security in Saudi society.

Conclusion

The current study aimed to examine the relationship between psychological security and the Dark Triad personality traits, as well as to explore whether there are differences in these variables related to the place of residence (village/city). The results revealed a positive statistically significant relationship between psychological security and Machiavellian and narcissistic traits, while there was no significant relationship with the psychopathic trait. Additionally, there were no differences in the study variables related to the place of residence. It was found that psychological security can be predicted from the narcissistic trait, as positive feelings towards others reflect a sense of psychological security experienced by the female students, which is a common characteristic throughout the Saudi population. Therefore, the study suggests that academic institutions, especially in higher education, should consider implementing counseling and preventive programs to address the personality traits of university students and their psychological well-being, ensuring they graduate as academically and psychologically qualified individuals. Furthermore, the study recommends effective counseling programs be developed to enhance students' psychological security at different stages of education. Another recommendation is to provide counseling programs for clinical assistance to university students who exhibit Dark Triad personality traits if needed, while also raising awareness among professionals to offer psychological services to university students with such dark personality traits before they exacerbate into pathological characteristics. One of the implications of the study is the affirmation of the role of universities in cultivating mature minds to build and uplift societies. Additionally, the study encourages future research to investigate related variables, further advancing our understanding of these topics.

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