



## INFLUENCE OF DARK TRIAD ON SPORTS PERFORMANCE OF ATHLETES IN PRINCE ABUBAKAR AUDU UNIVERSITY ANYIGBA KOGI STATE

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### ABSTRACT

The study aimed to investigate the influence of dark triad on sports performance of athletes in Prince Abubakar Audu University Anyigba. The survey research design was used for the conduct of this study. The population of the study comprised of 368 registered athletes from the just concluded inter faculty competition, 2024. The simple random sampling technique was used to select 5 faculties out of the 8 faculties in PAAU. Stratified sampling technique was used to select 92 respondents who are basketball, football and volleyball players. A self-constructed questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents. The questionnaire was given to three (3) research personnel in the Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education for any necessary correction after which the questionnaire was administered to the respondents during their usual game time. Descriptive statistic of frequency and percentage were used to analyse the demographic data while frequency, mean and standard deviation were used to analyse the research questions. The findings of the study revealed that there is a prevalence of dark triad among athletes in PAAU and that dark triad has a positive influence on the sports performance of athletes in PAAU. It can be concluded that despite the fact that dark triad tend to give rise to antisocial behaviour, it still has a great influence on performance outcome of PAAU athletes. It is recommended that coaches should know how to handle dark triad traits among athletes in such a way that will help them gain an edge in winning a competition and that athletes should always channel their personality traits towards winning a competition and achieving success in sports, not just using it to cause infringements on the opponents.

**Keywords:** Athletes, dark triad, performance, sports and athletes

## Introduction

Sports performance is influenced by different behavioural traits which sometimes seem to inflict danger on the opponents as some of these behaviours do not put the opponents in consideration. Athletes often tend to develop behaviours that will enable them achieve robust performance outcome and behaviours that will lead to winning regardless of the implications on the opponents. Personality qualities have a big impact on an athlete's success (Vaughan & Madigan, 2021). Sports performance is influenced by personality both directly and indirectly (Allen et al., 2013). Literature suggests that exceptional athletes' personalities have a big influence on their development (Hardy et al., 2017). In this context, the Dark Triad is an especially relevant group of psychological qualities (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). The "Dark Triad" (DT) refers to three prominent psychological qualities that are related to each other and distinct: psychopathy, narcissism, and Machiavellianism. Narcissism, according to Maples et al. (2014), is an expression of grandiosity, feelings of superiority, and rationalization. Machiavellianism is characterized by dishonesty, manipulation, and self-serving. Psychopathy is characterized by impulsivity, lack of empathy, and anxiety (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). The three personality traits collectively represent an antagonistic, malignant, egocentric, and negative character, which is why they are often positively correlated with aggression, morally dubious decisions, and difficulties maintaining positive interpersonal relationships (Furnham et al., 2014; Muris et al., 2017). People tend to excuse or justify their antisocial behavior, especially when it goes against their own ideals and social conventions. Previous studies have shown that those with antagonistic personality traits—such as psychopathy, narcissism, and Machiavellianism—report more antisocial acts than their counterparts (Klimstra et al., 2014). Less is known about the underlying causes of these associations, although these personality traits have also been connected to weaker moral thinking and increased use of moral disengagement as a justification for antisocial conducts (Tuvblad, 2014).

These personality traits were also linked to worse moral thinking and more use of justification for antisocial behaviors, notably in the form of moral disengagement, although less is known about the underlying reasons causing these correlations (Nicholls et al., 2017). Vaughan et al. (2018) reported DT interacts with mental toughness to predict athletes' levels of physical activity. More recently, underlining their applicability to sports, Vaughan and Madigan (2021)

discovered that the DT predicted sport training performance in addition to competitiveness. The DT may be highly pertinent and have significant repercussions for athletes.

Since that sportsmen are looked up to as public role models, these inclinations are not just seen as personal issues for the athletes; they also have a big impact on society as a whole. The dark triad is made up of normal personality traits that frequently lead to problem behaviors: narcissism, which is characterized by competitive, aggressive attitudes toward others as well as the desire for status and fame; psychopathy, which is characterized by interpersonal and emotional traits like remorselessness and selfishness; and machiavellianism, which is characterized by the manipulation and exploitation of others (Jonason & Webster, 2010; Tamura, Oshio, Tanaka, Masui, & Jonason, 2015). Thus yet, only little research have been conducted internationally on the dark triad's role in competitive sports. One of those studies has reported that people participating in competitive sports have higher scores for the dark triad than nonparticipants (Strout & Carter, 2015). The dark triad is thought to indicate socially undesirable responses from an evolutionary standpoint. Nonetheless, it might serve adaptive purposes in some contexts and professions (Jonason, Li, Webster, & Schmitt, 2009; Paulhus & Williams, 2002). Previous studies have indicated that the dark triad is more adaptive in interpersonal settings (these includes studies conducted by, Furnham, Richards, & Paulhus, 2013; Jonason et al., 2009; Paulhus & Williams, 2002).

One advantage of the Dark Triad personality qualities for athletes, especially performance athletes, may be the drive to pursue personal objectives and high performance at the expense of other people's objectives and feelings (Carter et al., 2015). Despite being viewed as maladaptive, certain personality qualities can occasionally give their bearer an edge over others (Furnham et al., 2013).

Research outside of sports suggests an agency-communion model of narcissism that separates individuals who satisfy grandiose, self-esteem, entitlement, and power beliefs in agentic and communal contexts (Gebauer et al., 2012). As a result, in many situations, people with high levels of narcissism may perform better to accomplish their goals. But studies outside of sports also show that, generally speaking, narcissists do no better than other narcissists (Judge et al., 2006). According to Roberts et al. (2018) and 2019 (Roberts), narcissism may not be a strong

predictor of performance on its own, but rather may fuel particular behaviors (like competitiveness) that only surface and support performance in competitive circumstances.

Furnham et al., (2014) in their study revealed that there is a situation-specific relationship between Machiavellianism and performance; for example, it may be favorable in the short term but unfavorable in the long run. There is little doubt that the Dark Triad and performance have a complicated relationship. According to research, the observed context has a crucial role in determining whether performance impacts are favorable or bad. This claim is supported by the notion of trait activation (Tett et al., 2013). This theory outlines an interactionist viewpoint in which a trait is activated in response to situational cues that are relevant to the trait (situation relevance includes competition), trait-specific behaviors are then engaged. This could involve a greater drive to succeed in the context of the Dark Triad in order to satiate fundamental desires like social dominance (Jones & Figueredo, 2013). Geukes et al. (2012) looked at how this theoretical approach was used in sports and discovered that athletes with high levels of narcissism and self-consciousness perform better under high pressure, whereas these traits are irrelevant under moderate pressure.

It was seen that psychopathy, such as the use of derogatory/ vindictive comments towards an elite athlete, results in positive developmental characteristics, such as enhanced motivation, resilience, and coping strategies being acquired (Arnold et al., 2018). Stanford, et al (2024) in their study established that greater levels of psychopathy were associated with lower levels of all elements of coaches' own relationship quality and athletes' own commitment and complementary behaviors. Generally, we would expect that any reduction in relationship quality would lead to poorer performance (Davis et al., 2018), with psychopathic traits negatively linked to performance success (Hassall et al., 2015) because of the inclination towards self-serving and interpersonally cold, calculating behaviors (Furnham et al., 2013). Interpersonal associations of psychopathy are related to an aggressive and coercive social style (Jonason & Webster, 2012) through enhanced verbal and physical aggression (Jonason et al., 2015). However, surprisingly, no evidence of negative interpersonal associations of psychopathy on relationship quality (i.e., partner effects) were found in this study. High-performance dyads might be emotionally disengaged from each other whilst in pursuit of mutual goals or they may not perceive their dyadic partner to be as important as the mutual goal if they achieve their desired success. For example, in a sporting

context, coaches are required to make decisions which may be unpalatable to athletes, such as player selection, for the benefit of performance results. Individuals high in psychopathy also tend to score low in neuroticism (Garcia et al., 2015). Therefore, the negative interpersonal associations with psychopathy might not be relevant to high-performance relationships where individuals choose to utilize the fearlessness, emotional detachment, and calculating nature of this trait to be ruthless in the pursuit of triumph. Interestingly, we did demonstrate that psychopathy was linked to lower levels of dyadic members' own relationship quality, illustrating that this trait might be linked to more intrapersonal associations within high-performance domains.

By investigating the influence of dark personality traits and antisocial behaviors as a mediator on a player's athletic performance, the current study aims to further our understanding of this relationship. However, there hasn't been much research done on the effects of dark triad on sports performance of football, volleyball and basketball players in Prince Abubakar Audu University Anyigba. Therefore, this study investigate the perceived effects of dark triad on sports performance of PAAU athletes.

The study aim to access the prevalence of dark triad among Prince Abubakar Audu University elite athletes and to unveil the influence of dark triad on performance outcome of athletes of Prince Abubakar Audu University Anyigba.

## Methodology

The study use a descriptive survey research design. According to Daramola (2006), it entails direct observation in the collection of data. The population of the study comprises of all the registered football, volleyball and basketball players from the 8 faculties in Prince Abubakar Audu University Anyigba. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 5 faculties for the study. Out of 368 registered players for the just concluded interfaculty competition 2023, 25% (92) of the population was selected for the study using a stratified sampling techniques to select players from the three (3) distinct games. A self-structured questionnaire was used to obtain data from the respondents. There were two (2) sections with five (5) items under each, making a total of fifteen (10) items. The questionnaire was validated and tested for reliability using Spearman Brown rank correlation, and coefficient result of 0.86 was obtained. The responses were rated on modified four (4)Likert scale, Strongly Agree (SA) 4 points, Agree (A) 3 points, Disagree (D) 2 points and Strongly Disagree (SD) 1 point. Descriptive statistics of percentage and frequency was used to

analyse the demographic data while mean and standard deviation for the research questions. Thus, any mean score of response of 2.5 and above is acceptable, while mean scores of response less than 2.5 is not acceptable.

## Results

**Table 1. Demographic data**

Characteristics	Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	18-25 Years	39	42.4
	26-33 Years	36	39.1
	33 Years and above	17	18.5
Gender	Male	65	70.7
	Female	27	29.3
Sports Played	Basketball	32	34.8
	Football	35	38.0
	Volleyball	25	27.2
Faculty	Education	22	23.9
	Agricultural Science	26	28.3
	Management Science	10	10.9
	Natural Science	17	18.5
	Social Science	17	18.5
Total		92	100

Table 1 above shows the demographic parameters of the respondents. The table revealed that ninety two (92) respondents participated in the study. The age range 18-25 has a frequency of 39 (42.4%), age range 26-33 has 36 (39.1%) while age range 33 and above has a frequency of 17 (18.5%). This implies that the highest number of respondents are between the age range 26-33. The table also revealed that the male gender has a frequency of 65 (70.7) while that of female has a frequency of 27 (29.3%), meaning that the males have the highest number of respondents. The table also revealed that the frequency of Basketball players is 32 (34.8%), Football players with the frequency of 35 (38.0) while that of Volleyball players with the frequency of 25 (27.2%). This means that the Football players have the highest number of response. Finally, the table also revealed that the respondents from faculty of Education has a frequency of 22 (23.9%), Agricultural Science with 26 (28.3%), Management Science with the frequency of 10 (10.9%),

Natural Science with the frequency of 17 (18.5%) while Social Science with the frequency of 17 (18.5%). This indicates that the highest number of respondents is from Agricultural Science.

**Table 2.** Prevalence of dark triad among athletes in Prince Abubakar Audu University Anyigba

S/N	Items	SD	A	D	SD	M	SD
1	I believe that manipulation is often necessary to achieve my goals	21	71	0	0	3.23	.4220
2	I would use deceit if it could benefit my career in sports	22	70	0	0	3.24	.4289
3	I seek admiration and praise from others in my sport	47	45	0	0	3.51	.5026
4	I can be aggressive if it means achieving my objectives	52	40	0	0	3.57	.4984
5	I rarely feel guilty for my actions, even if they harm others	43	49	0	0	3.47	.5017
	Total					3.40	.1167

Table 2 shows the frequency, Mean and Standard deviation of the prevalence of dark triad among athletes in Prince Abubakar Audu University, Anyigba. The result revealed there is a prevalence of dark triad among the athletes in PAAU, this is shown in all of the items where respondents responded to positively, and as indicated by the aggregate mean score of 3.40 which was found to be greater than the benchmark of 2.50. This means that there is a prevalence of dark triad among athletes in PAAU.

**Table 3. Research question 2:** What are the influences of dark triad on sport performance of Prince Abubakar Audu University athletes

S/N	Items	SD	A	D	SD	M	SD
1	I believe my personal traits b(e.g., competitiveness, assertiveness) contribute to my performance in sports	48	44	0	0	3.52	.5023
2	I handle pressure and stress well during competition	26	66	0	0	3.28	.4527
3	I often have conflicts with teammates or coaches due to my behavior	7	21	64		2.38	.6262
4	My ability to lead and motivate others positively impacts my team's performance	20	72	0	0	3.21	.4147
5	I am skilled at adapting my strategies to overcome obstacles during competition	48	44	0	0	3.48	.5023
	Total					3.18	.2978



Table 2 shows the frequency, Mean and Standard deviation on the influence of dark triad on the sports performance of Prince Abubakar Audu University athletes. The result revealed that there is a positive influence on performance outcome of athletes. This is shown in all of the items where respondents responded to positively, as indicated by the aggregate mean score of 3.18 which was found to be greater than the benchmark of 2.50. This means that there is a positive impact of dark triad on the performance outcome of athletes in PAAU.

## **Discussion**

The finding of research question one revealed that there is a prevalence of dark triad among athletes in Prince Abubakar Audu University, Anyigba. This is in consonant with the study of Strout & Carter (2015) who reported that people participating in competitive sports have higher scores for the dark triad than nonparticipants.

Finally, the finding of research question two revealed that there is a positive influence of dark triad on the performance of athletes in PAAU. This result is supported by Vaughan & Madigan (2021) who opined that personality qualities have a big impact on an athlete's success. Sports performance is influenced by personality both directly and indirectly (Allen et al., 2013). One advantage of the Dark Triad personality qualities for athletes, especially performance athletes, may be the drive to pursue personal objectives and high performance at the expense of other people's objectives and feelings (Carter et al., 2015).

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the study revealed that there is a prevalence of dark triad among athletes in PAAU and that players with dark triad personality achieve success in sport performance. In as much as dark triad is found to be an antisocial behaviour, it has also proven to increase performance in competitive sports and helped athletes to achieve success in sports performance.

## **Recommendation**

Base on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Coaches should know how to handle dark triad traits among athletes in such a way that will help them gain an edge in winning a competition.
2. Athletes should always channel their personality traits towards winning a competition and achieving success in sports, not just using it to cause infringements on the opponents.

## **Conflict of interest**

There is no conflict of interest



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