Interpersona
An International Journal on Personal Relationships

PsychOpen GOLD

Research Articles

Check for updates

Relations Between Authoritarianism, Just World Beliefs, and the Dark Triad Life Philosophy

Iraklis Grigoropoulos [1]

[1] *Department of Psychology, Panteion University, Athens, Greece.*

Interpersona, 2024, Vol. 18(1), 104–123, https://doi.org/10.5964/ijpr.11273

Received: 2023-02-02 • **Accepted:** 2023-10-01 • **Published (VoR):** 2024-06-28

Corresponding Author: Iraklis Grigoropoulos, Tirolois 2, 54351, Thessaloniki, Greece. E-mail: griraklis@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examines whether latent biases about the world as a dangerous place lead to antisocial tendencies, suggesting that dark personality traits are not necessarily evil but condition-dependent solutions to analogous worldview perceptions. The application of this model indicates that the extent to which an individual exhibits dark personality traits is determined, in part, by their level of authoritarian ideology (i.e., high in RWA) and the extent to which personal beliefs in a just world moderate this relationship. A convenience non-probability sample of 211 participants (age range: 19–59 years, M_age = 32.76, SD = 11.87; 191 female participants) participated in the current online study. Moderation analysis was performed to assess if the influence of authoritarian ideology (RWA) on Dark Triad life philosophy is the same across different levels of personal beliefs in a just world. This study's results provide evidence of the moderating influence of Personal Belief in a Just World such that the positive relationship between RWA and Machiavellianism was weakened among those with lower levels of Personal Belief in a Just World. Individual differences in Personal Belief in a Just World and authoritarian ideology (RWA) influence the Machiavellianism side of human nature.

Keywords

Dark Triad, personality, Right-Wing Authoritarianism, Belief in a Just World

A significant amount of psychological study examines the Dark Triad and how it affects attitudes and behaviors (Jonason & Webster, 2010; Jones & Paulhus, 2010; Peterson & Palmer, 2021; Rauthmann & Kolar, 2012; Vernon et al., 2008). However, whether the way someone perceives the world influences the degree to which someone engages in socially undesirable behaviors, exhibiting a selfish/ exploitive way of life, has received much less attention.

According to the dual-process motivational model of ideological attitudes (DPM; Duckitt, 2001), RWA has a variety of social worldview beliefs and effects on intergroup behavior and outcomes. In addition, RWA is influenced by social threats and is highly correlated with a negative perception of the social environment (Duckitt, 2001).

The degree to which an individual perceives the environment as relatively safe versus unsafe (the external threat component) and the degree to which one believes that good people are ultimately shielded from various threats (the buffer component) are two main ways to conceptualize the world (Lambert et al., 1999). Thus, dangerous and demanding socioecological circumstances threatening self and collective security may activate the Dark Triad life philosophy, influencing the manifestation of socially undesirable behaviors (Jonason et al., 2014). The threat component is theorized to be related to right-wing authoritarianism (RWA; Duckitt, 2001). As a result, individuals high in RWA may be highly reactive to threats to collective and self-security, perceiving the world as more dangerous than those low in RWA. Belief in a just world (BJW) is conceptually linked to the buffer component. BJW is expected to dampen the relationship between RWA and Dark Triad life philosophy (Lambert et al., 1999).

The three traits that make up the Dark Triad are Narcissism (an exaggerated feeling of one's own importance), Psychopathy (a lack of empathy or regret for one's conduct), and Machiavellianism, the propensity to use people as tools for one's own aims (Paulhus & Williams, 2002; Peterson & Palmer, 2021). Evolutionary psychologists believe the Dark Triad to be sensitive to socioecological conditions (Jonason et al., 2013, 2014; McDonald et al., 2012). Even if they are heritable, personality traits like the Dark Triad are nonetheless susceptible to changes in environmental conditions (Vernon et al., 2008). Environmental factors that might impact how the Dark Triad traits emerge include the degree to which one perceives the environment as relatively safe versus dangerous (Jonason et al., 2014).

A person's approach to life and, thus, their personality traits may be strongly influenced by their ideological attitudes (i.e., RWA). Therefore, this study examines whether right-wing authoritarianism (RWA; Altemeyer, 1988), and Personal Belief in a Just World (PBJW; Lerner, 1980) influence someone's selfish/exploitative way of life. Hence, being highly reactive to threats to collective and self-security (i.e., high in RWA) and, therefore high in Personal Belief in a Just World may encourage the adoption of a Dark Triad life philosophy. When considering this possibility, it is essential to keep in mind that one construct (RWA) is significantly associated with general perceptions of the world as a threatening place as regards collective security (e.g., tradition, social order), and the other construct (PBJW) is related to whether people believe they are at risk of experiencing this negative side of the world.

Right-Wing Authoritarianism

Social scientists have long been intrigued by authoritarianism, created to comprehend why some people might be more prejudiced than others (Lambert et al., 1999). The concept of authoritarianism has existed since at least the middle of the 1930s (e.g., Edwards, 1941). Still, Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick, Levinson, and Sanford's famous book The Authoritarian Personality, published in 1950, is where it first received widespread attention. According to Adorno et al. (1950), authoritarians have a generalized rigidity of thought and moral development and frequently have harsh punishments for those whose actions stray from socially accepted norms.

The three essential elements of authoritarianism are submission to authority, unquestioning acceptance of tradition, and antagonism against those who challenge authority and tradition. These attitudes are now primarily considered a collection of socio-political attitudes (Altemeyer 1981). Although authoritarianism has long been associated with extreme right-wing political philosophy, some have claimed it also exists on the left (Durrheim, 1997). Based on previous research data, leftwing authoritarianism is a fundamental concept that accurately captures the mindset of some extreme leftists (Van Hiel et al., 2006). However, only right-wing authoritarianism is addressed in this study because it is primarily this sort that the Greek economic crisis has fueled (Tzogopoulos, 2016).

It might seem that there is minimal connection between perceiving the world as a threatening place and authoritarianism at first glance. However, there are theoretical and empirical grounds for thinking that higher RWA levels represent a view of a riskier worldview. Altemeyer has reported much empirical research on this subject (1988). Researchers contend that authoritarian views become more prominent when people with a certain disposition encounter particular threats (Cohrs, 2013; Onraet & Van Hiel, 2013). Previous research findings demonstrate that people and communities frequently adopt authoritarian beliefs after painful and overwhelming events. From a social-cognitive approach, psychological insecurity lies at the heart of authoritarianism brought on by a particular trauma (e.g., excessive parental control; Oesterreich, 2005). Only the unquestioning acceptance of absolute authoritarian ideologies can give individuals a sense of security in what they believe to be a dangerous and unpredictable world (McCann & Stewin, 1987). According to this body of research, authoritarianism is a traumatic reaction triggered by the perception of a real threat to one's or society's well-being. It involves a persistent exaggeration of that threat (Oesterreich, 2005).

In addition, persons with an authoritarian temperament view specific occurrences as a threat to social cohesiveness and, consequently, their sense of group identity, and the authoritarian response itself aims to restore both individual and group security (Duckitt, 1989; Kreindler, 2005). Feldman (2003) argues that those who value social conformity over individual autonomy may see threats to social cohesion as threats to social order, which could lead to intolerance and prejudice. The belief that the social world is inherently unpredictable and threatening (as opposed to safe, stable, and secure)

makes people high in RWA express the value or motivational goal of establishing and maintaining societal security, order, cohesion, and stability, which is chronically salient for individuals. Thus, Altemeyer's (1998) right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) focuses on conventionalism and hostility caused by social learning, a conforming mentality, and danger-themed worldviews that highlight risk (Altemeyer, 1998; Duckitt, 2005). As Duckitt et al. (2002) argue, authoritarianism and social dominance function as individualized ideological beliefs about how individuals should interact and how societies should be organized.

The present study is concerned with this implication of authoritarianism (i.e., Oesterreich's notion of authoritarian insecurity), as this perspective fuels this study's hypotheses. Overall, according to Altemeyer's conclusion, individuals high in RWA consider the world substantially more dangerous than others (Altemeyer, 1988, p. 147).

Belief in a Just World

The just world hypothesis was first proposed by Lerner (1965) to explain why individuals blame victims by assuming that the victim must have done something to deserve their situation. This theory's fundamental premise is that "individuals need to believe that they live in a world where people generally get what they deserve" (Lerner & Miller, 1978, p. 1030). For this study's purposes, it is helpful to consider Belief in a Just World (BJW) as an individual belief system, or cognitive style, that reflects an investment in the notion that good things happen to good people, but bad things happen to bad people. Believing otherwise might entail the notion that the world is unpredictable and that they may be mistreated (Dalbert, 2009; Furnham, 2003). People usually avoid such beliefs as they may raise feelings of discomfort (van den Bos & Lind, 2002). Accordingly, belief in a just world reduces anxiety and uncertainty and rationalizes inaction against social injustice, as the most disadvantaged have the most to legitimize and explain (Jost & Hunyady, 2002).

In light of the above, the present study introduces the socio-psychological construct of Personal Belief in a Just World (PBJW) in examining whether those avoiding such beliefs (people with lower levels of PBJW) will also be less reactive to threats to collective security (individuals low in RWA) compared to those with high PBJW. Individuals with a high PBJW want to see the world as safer, so a link was assumed between PBJW and RWA and the Dark Triad life philosophy. This assumption was based on the logic that individuals high in RWA will be more reactive to threats to collective security. Accordingly, high RWA may significantly change a person's perspective and, consequently, their Dark Triad life philosophy. Therefore we predict PBJW to influence the relationship between RWA and Dark Triad life philosophy (i.e., Dark Triad Traits)

Dark Triad Traits

Machiavellianism, Narcissism, and Psychopathy are three socially aversive traits examined as overlapping constellations known as the Dark Triad (Jones & Paulhus, 2014). In particular, (a) manipulativeness, (b) callous affect, and (c) a strategic-calculating orientation seem to be the main characteristics of Machiavellianism. Emotion deficits (i.e., callousness) and self-control (i.e., impulsivity) are two essential components of Psychopathy. High self-esteem, dreams of power, fantasies of gaining adoration, and a desire to be loved by others are all characteristics of Narcissism (Jones & Paulhus, 2014). These subclinical dark personality traits are linked to various negative behaviors and attitudes in social situations (Jones & Paulhus, 2009; Peterson & Palmer, 2021).

This Study

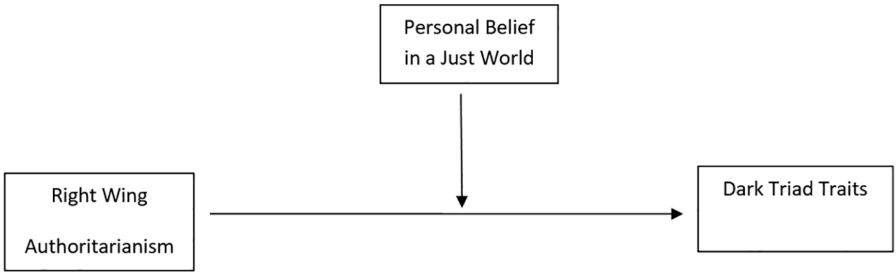
This study examines whether latent biases about the world as a dangerous place lead to antisocial tendencies, suggesting that Dark personality traits are not necessarily evil but condition-dependent solutions to analogous worldview perceptions.

Our application of this model suggests that the extent to which an individual exhibits dark personality traits is determined, in part, by their level of authoritarianism (i.e., RWA) and the extent to which PBJW buffers this relationship.

Thus among those high on RWA, weaker personal beliefs in a just world were expected to decrease their Dark Triad life philosophy. However, among those low in RWA, personal beliefs in a just world were not expected to play any significant role. The effects of authoritarianism (i.e., RWA) and Personal Belief in a Just World (PBJW) may differ in the parts of the Dark Triad. Thus, we hypothesized that the effect of authoritarianism on participants' endorsement of a Dark Triad life philosophy would be moderated by a Personal Belief in a Just World grounded on the theoretical line that lower levels of Personal Belief in a Just World would buffer individuals' high response to threats to collective security (Lambert et al., 1999). To do this, we examined whether PBJW moderates the effect of RWA on Dark Triad traits. More specifically, the following model was expected to be significant (Figure 1):

Figure 1

Theoretical Model: The Effect of Authoritarianism on Participants' Endorsement of a Dark Triad Life Philosophy May Be Moderated by a Personal Belief in a Just World



In addition, this model's fundamental presumptions are comparable to those of the buffering hypothesis, which theorists in the social support domain established (e.g., Cohen & Wills, 1985; see also Stroebe & Stroebe, 1995). The current study provides new information about how individual differences in RWA associate with a Dark Triad life philosophy.

Method

Design

A questionnaire-based correlational methodology was utilized to measure Dark Triad traits, right-wing authoritarianism (RWA), and Personal Belief in a Just World. Data were gathered between September and November 2022.

Participants and Procedure

A convenience non-probability sample of 211 participants (age range: 19–59 years, M_{age} = 32.76, *SD* = 11.87; 191 female participants) took part in the current online study through a snowball-like technique as the URL of the questionnaire was publicized on the researcher's university social networks and forums. Using an online calculator (see Soper, 2020), the minimum suggested size was 184 participants with an anticipated effect size of 0.30 (recommended for instrumental SEM research), a desired probability of 0.05, and a statistical power level of 0.95.

The online survey was completely anonymous, and participants indicated their agreement to participate by selecting the consent checkbox. The majority of the participants identified as heterosexual (200; 94.8%), 1.4% as lesbian/gay (3), 1.4% asexual (3), and 2.4% as bisexual (5). The majority of the participants were students, 38.9% (82), whereas

28% (59) had a postgraduate degree, 24.6% (52) were university graduates, and 8.5% (18) had completed secondary education. Respondents completed measures of Dark Triad personality traits, right-wing authoritarianism, and personal beliefs in a just world. The convenience of the sample may have influenced the current analyses. This study follows all principles of the Declaration of Helsinki on Ethical Principles for Medical Research Involving Human Subjects and all the ethical instructions and directions of the institution to which the researcher belongs.

Measures

Respondents completed a demographics form (gender, age, sexual orientation, educational level) and the following questionnaires.

The Short Dark Triad Scale — The Short Dark Triad (SD3, Jones & Paulhus, 2014) scale measures three personalities: Machiavellianism, Narcissism, and Psychopathy. The SD3 consists of three subscales, each with nine statements. After reversing the appropriate items, the results on each item of the subscale were averaged to provide composite scores for each dark personality trait and a composite score for the entire DT total score (see Persson et al., 2019). The format of the responses ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The Greek version of the Short Dark Triad (SD3) was used (Grigoropoulos, 2024).

Right-Wing Authoritarianism Scale - Short Version — The Right-Wing Authoritarianism Scale - Short Version (RWASS; Zakrisson, 2005), which evaluates authoritarian beliefs without mentioning particular social groupings, was used to measure RWA. Participants responded to 15 items (e.g., "The old-fashioned ways and old-fashioned values still show the best way to live) using a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). Increased scores indicate a more significant endorsement of RWA.

Personal Belief in a Just World (PBJM) — Using Dalbert's scale (Dalbert, 2009), *Personal Belief in a Just World* was measured with seven items (e.g., "I believe that, by and large, I deserve what happens to me"). Participants responded to all items on a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*), with higher scores indicating a stronger PBJM.

For the last two measures, translation accuracy for the Greek context has been verified through back-translation (Brislin, 1970) with appropriate cultural-linguistic adaptation (Swami & Barron, 2019).

Analytic Strategy

The normality of data distribution was determined using the Shapiro-Wilk test. Data were non-normally distributed. Bivariate correlation (Kendall's Tau correlation analysis)

was generated to explore the associations between variables of interest. Next, moderation analysis was performed, using AMOS-21 for SPSS, to assess if the influence of RWA on Dark Triad traits is the same across different levels of PBJW. Alpha level was set at 0.05.

Statistical Analysis and Results

In the initial data analysis stage, the validity of the scales was examined by utilizing confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in AMOS-21.

Factorial Structure of the Dark Triad Scale and Reliability

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to assess the factor structure of the *Short Dark Triad Scale* among the 211 participants. The model-fit measures were used to assess the model's overall goodness of fit (CMIN/*df*, GFI, CFI, TLI, SRMR, and RMSEA). The Short Dark Triad (SD3) Items 1, 7, 9, 15, 17, 18, 20, 25, 26 had very low weights and were removed, leaving Items 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8 for Machiavellianism, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16 for Narcissism and 19, 21, 22, 23, 24, 17 for Psychopathy. The final model appropriately fits the data (Table 1, Figure 2; F1= Machiavellianism; F2 = Narcissism; F3 = Psychopathy). Cronbach's alpha assessed the reliability of each Dark personality trait dimension.

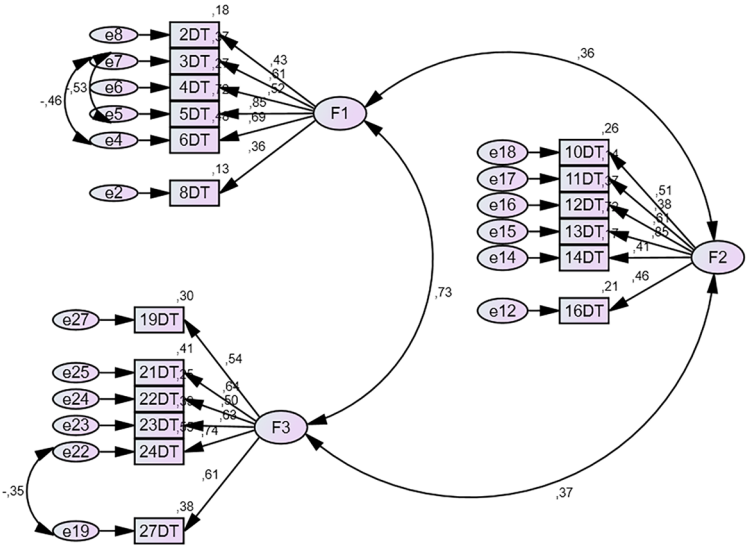
Table 1

Factorial Structure of the Short Dark Triad Scale

Fit Indices	Recommended Value	Source	Model 1
GFI	> .90	Hair et al. (2010)	.903
CFI	> .90	Bentler (1990)	.917
TLI	> .90	Bentler (1990)	.901
SRMR	< .08	Hu & Bentler (1998)	.053
RMSEA	< .08	Hu & Bentler (1998)	.076

Figure 2

Factor Structure of the Short Dark Triad, Including Item Weights



Factorial Structure of the Right-Wing Authoritarianism Scale - Short Version

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was also used to assess the factor structure of the Right-Wing Authoritarianism Scale - Short Version among the 211 participants. The model-fit measures were used to assess the model's overall goodness of fit (CMIN/*df*, GFI, CFI, TLI, SRMR, and RMSEA). The Items 2, 7, 8, 10, 15 had very low weights and were removed. The specified one-factor model fits the data appropriately (Table 2, Figure 3, Figure 4). Cronbach's alpha assessed the reliability of the Right-Wing Authoritarianism Scale - Short Version.

Table 2

Factorial Structure of the Right-Wing Authoritarianism Scale - Short Version

Fit Indices	Recommended Value	Source	Model 1
GFI	> .90	Hair et al. (2010)	.932
CFI	> .90	Bentler (1990)	.910
TLI	> .90	Bentler (1990)	.090
SRMR	< .08	Hu & Bentler (1998)	.076
RMSEA	< .08	Hu & Bentler (1998)	.060

Figure 3

Factor Structure of the Right-Wing Authoritarianism Scale - Short Version

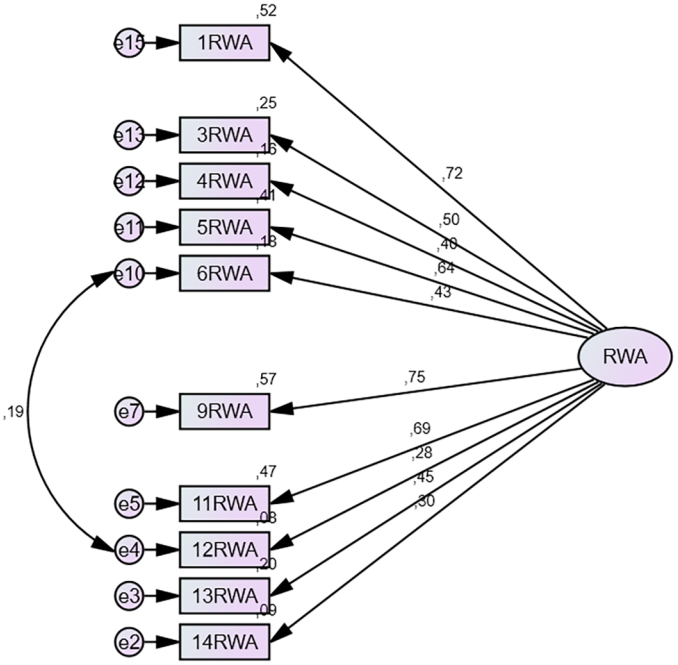
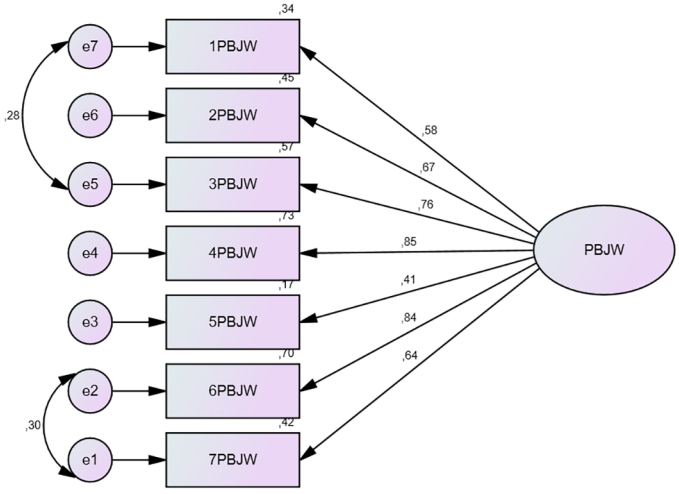


Figure 4

Factor Structure of the Personal Belief in a Just World (PBJM)



Factorial Structure of the Personal Belief in a Just World (PBJM)

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was used to assess the factor structure of the *Personal Belief in a Just World Scale* (*PBJM*) among the 211 participants. The model-fit measures were used to assess the model's overall goodness of fit (CMIN/*df*, GFI, CFI, TLI, SRMR, and RMSEA). The specified one-factor model fits the data well (Table 3, Figure 3). Cronbach's alpha assessed the reliability of each Dark personality trait dimension.

Table 3

Factorial Structure of the Personal Belief in a Just World (PBJM)

Fit Indices	Recommended Value	Source	Model 1
GFI	> .90	Hair et al. (2010)	.968
CFI	> .90	Bentler (1990)	.982
TLI	> .90	Bentler (1990)	.968
SRMR	< .08	Hu & Bentler (1998)	.069
RMSEA	< .08	Hu & Bentler (1998)	.036

The Relationship of Study's Variables With the Dark Triad Traits

The relationship between Dark Triad traits, RWA, and Personal Belief in a Just World (PBJW) was examined through bivariate correlations (Table 4). Personal Belief in a Just World was positively associated with Narcissism and negatively associated with Psychopathy. Right-wing authoritarianism was positively associated with Machiavellianism.

Table 4

Cross-Scale Correlations for the Study Variables (n = 211)

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	α
1. Machiavellianism	2.69	0.57	—						.70
2. Narcissism	2.74	0.59	.201**	—					.70
3. Psychopathy	1.73	0.54	.437**	.148**	—				.77
4. PBJW	3.65	0.86	-.052	.109*	-.098*	—			.86
5. RWA	9.98	0.80	.200**	051	.034	.064	—		.79
6. DT (Total score)	2.39	0.41	.654**	.491**	.599**	-.014	.120*	—	.82

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

Moderation Effect of PBJW on Study Variables

Next, we examined whether Personal Belief in a Just World affects the strength of the relationship between RWA and Dark Triad total score as well as each of the three Dark Triad factors. For this purpose, a series of moderation models in AMOS-21 were performed.

The results demonstrate a significant negative moderating impact of Personal Belief in a Just World on the relationship between RWA and Machiavellianism (b = -0.090, t = -2.015, p = .044; Figure 5). As shown in Figure 6, the influence of Personal Belief in a Just World dampens the positive relationship between RWA and Machiavellianism. Thus, for participants who reported lower levels of Personal Belief in a Just World, the relationship between RWA and Machiavellianism was weaker (b = .22, SE = .06, 95% CI [.13, .38], p < .001) when compared to average or higher levels of Personal Belief in a Just World (b = .17, SE = .04, 95% CI [.09, .26], p < .001; b = .09, SE = .05, 95% CI [-.007, .19], p > .05, respectively). These results show the moderating effect of Personal Belief in a Just World. Hence, our hypothesis that lower levels of Personal Belief in a Just World would moderate the relationship between RWA and Machiavellianism was supported, such that the positive relationship between RWA and Machiavellianism was weakened among those with lower levels of Personal Belief in a Just World.

Figure 5

Moderation Effect of PBJW on Study Variables

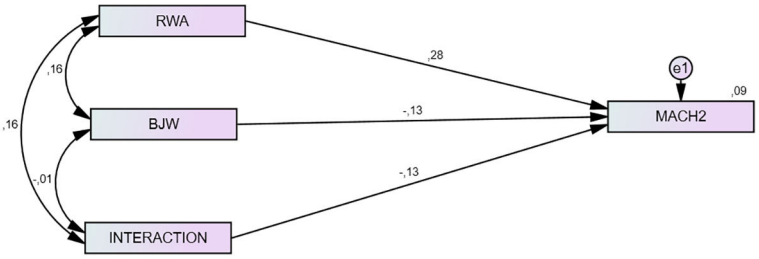
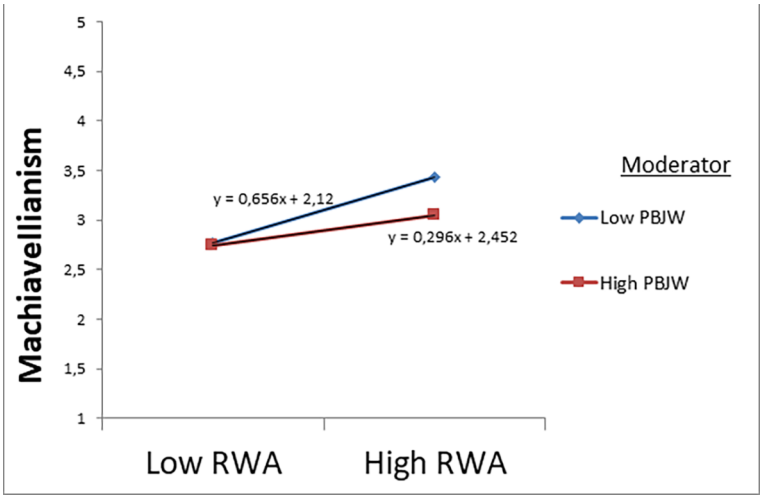


Figure 6

Moderation Effect: The Relationship Between RWA and Machiavellianism at Lower (-1 SD) and Higher (+1 SD) Levels of Personal Beliefs in a Just World



However, the moderating effect of PBJW on the relationship between RWA and Narcissism, between RWA and Psychopathy, and between RWA and DT total score was not significant (b = -.049, t = -1.034, p = 0.301; b = -0.049, t = -1.108, p = .268; b = -0.063, t = -1.810, p = .070, respectively).

Discussion

We all differ in how much our daily lives display light or dark thinking, mood, and action patterns (Kaufman et al., 2019). More than others, some people exhibit dark patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, and it is significant to examine what psychological factors predict these variations. The current study examined the theory that individuals high in RWA may exhibit a selfish/exploitative way of life (i.e., a malevolent side of human nature). More specifically, this study examined whether the degree to which an individual perceives the environment as relatively safe versus threatening (external threat component) and the degree to which one believes that good people are relatively protected from such threats (buffering component) can predict a Dark Triad life philosophy (i.e., Dark personality traits).

The threat component is theorized to be connected to RWA (Oesterreich's notion of authoritarian insecurity). As a result, people high in RWA are conceptualized as perceiving the world as more dangerous, meaning they are highly concerned about

threats to collective security, tradition, and social order. Personal Belief in a Just World is conceptually linked to the buffer component, so these beliefs are supposed to moderate the relationship between RWA and dark triad traits. (Lambert et al., 1999). Based on our implementation of this model, the influence of one's level of RWA on a Dark Triad life philosophy could be moderated by Personal Belief in a Just World (Lambert et al., 1999).

However, this study's results only partially support our theoretical concept. Interestingly, only RWA and Machiavellianism were positively correlated, maybe because RWAs believe in morality (Altemeyer, 1998). Accordingly, only the positive relationship between RWA and Machiavellianism was weakened among those with lower levels of Personal Belief in a Just World. In other words, Personal Belief in a Just World dumps the positive relationship between RWA and Machiavellianism.

People high in RWA might have more immature levels of ego development and tend to think about cause and consequence in relatively simple terms (see Loevinger, 1976). Thus, to the extent that high authoritarianism is linked to less sophisticated reasoning, individuals high in RWA may be more open to a malevolent (Machiavellian) side of human nature. This could explain Machiavellians' negative other and self-models (e.g., "all people are bad—including me"; Jones & Paulhus, 2009) and their cynical worldview (Christie & Geis, 1970). In addition, their overconcern for collective security and resistance to change may induce others to behave in a way that mirrors how Machiavellians behave (for example, to cause others to act cold because one is acting cold). This may elicit unfavorable responses from others (such as being looked down upon). Thus, higher levels of RWA may facilitate a Machiavellian life philosophy.

This could mean that turning to the Machiavellian side of human nature may constitute an adaptive response as dark personality traits—despite all of their negative effects and biases might have served and continue to serve adoptive purposes. The theoretical considerations suggested above show that individual differences in Personal Belief in a Just World and RWA interact with the emergence of the Machiavellian side of human nature.

This study's result coincides with evolutionary psychologists' suggestions that the Dark Triad may be responsive to socioecological circumstances. For example, stressful, hostile, or unstable life circumstances may activate a Dark Triad attitude toward life (see McDonald et al., 2012). Over the past ten years, the Dark Triad traits' popularity has been largely attributed to their integration into the Life History Theory's evolutionary framework (Wilson, 1975). According to the life history framework, the main argument against the Dark Triad traits is that they constitute cognitive biases (i.e., a tendency to act, react, and see the world in a particular way). Although the consequences of these biases are viewed as socially undesirable, they might be considered adaptive to the person. Based on this interactionist paradigm, organisms must make trade-offs to meet their immediate and long-term needs (Crawford & Anderson, 1989).

The fact that both Narcissism and Psychopathy appear to be multidimensional (Falkenbach, 2007), whereas Machiavellianism is one-dimensional (Hunter et al., 1982) might explain the insignificant influence of Personal Belief in a Just World on the relationship between RWA and Narcissism and RWA and Psychopathy. In particular, while primary Psychopathy depicts the callous attitudes aspect of Psychopathy, secondary Psychopathy focuses on the antisocial/criminal features of Psychopathy. As regards Narcissism, there are "lighter" parts of Narcissism, such as exhibitionism, as well as "darker" features, such as exploitativeness (Jonason et al., 2013). Therefore due to their multidimensional aspects, Narcissism and Psychopathy may correlate differently with RWA and Personal Belief in a Just World. However, Freyth et al. (2023) argue that all dark traits are theoretically and empirically multidimensional. Future studies should expand more on this particular area.

Additionally, some content is lost for the short Dark Triad scale, given that its creators wanted to create a unified, effective measure of all three qualities (Koehn et al., 2019). Overall, this study contributes to our understanding of the dark side of human nature even though in no way intended to encompass the whole range of Dark personality traits.

Limitations

It is important to stress that this study's results are correlational, raising the usual cautions regarding the limitations of inferring causality from correlational rather than experimental methods. Additional longitudinal data would be required to test this study's assumptions. Moreover, as this study's participants are all deemed young, future studies need to acquire a more balanced sample size from various age groups.

Even though the argument that the threat component is theorized to be connected to authoritarianism seems plausible, this study does not examine left-wing authoritarianism. Also, Duckitt et al. (2002) work draw attention to social dominance orientation (SDO), which is disregarded in the present work. Finally, there are a few more restrictions that additional research needs to address—for example, neither the subfacets nor the different "forms" of each Dark Triad trait were examined. Furthermore, although frequently characterized as unidimensional, Machiavellianism probably has subfacets (Rauthmann & Will, 2011). This requires more sophisticated measures of the Dark Triad to capture different subfacets.

Conclusions

This study sheds light on potential pathways that could influence the emergence of the Dark Triad life philosophy since high RWA and lower levels of Personal Belief in a Just World may influence the manifestation of Machiavellianism. To determine whether and how Dark Triad traits can be considered adaptive to an individual and not just

ethically objectionable personality traits is a complex issue. The Dark Triad literature would benefit from integrating different perspectives for each dimension, emphasizing the complexity of the model. Future longitudinal research should test similar theoretical concepts in various cultural contexts.

Funding: The author has no funding to report.

Acknowledgments: The author has no additional (i.e., non-financial) support to report.

Competing Interests: The author has declared that no competing interests exist.

Ethics Statement: All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

Informed Consent: Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

Data Availability: The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

References

Adorno, T. W., Frenkel-Brunswick, E., Levinson, D. J., & Sanford, R. N. (1950). *The authoritarian personality*. Harper & Row.

Altemeyer, B. (1981). *Right-wing authoritarianism*. University of Manitoba Press.

Altemeyer, B. (1998). The other ‘‘authoritarian personality”. In M. Zanna (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 30, pp. 47–92). Academic Press. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601(08)60382-2

Altemeyer, R. (1988). *Enemies of freedom: Understanding right-wing authoritarianism*. Jossey-Bass.

Bentler, P. M. (1990). Comparative fit indexes in structural models. *Psychological Bulletin, 107*(2), 238–246. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.107.2.238

Brislin, R. W. (1970). Translation and content analysis of oral and written material. In H. C. Triandis & J. W. Berry (Eds.), *Handbook of cross-cultural psychology: Methodology* (pp. 389–444). Allyn and Bacon.

Christie, R., & Geis, F. (1970). *Studies in Machiavellianism*. Academic Press. https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-174450-2.50006-3

Cohen, S., & Wills, T. A. (1985). Stress, social support, and the buffering hypothesis. *Psychological Bulletin, 98*(2), 310–357. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.98.2.310

Cohrs, J. C. (2013). Threat and authoritarianism: Some theoretical and methodological comments. *International Journal of Psychology, 48*(1), 50–54. https://doi.org/10.1080/00207594.2012.732699

Crawford, C. B., & Anderson, J. L. (1989). Sociobiology: An environmentalist discipline? *The American Psychologist, 44*(12), 1449–1459. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.44.12.1449

Dalbert, C. (2009). Belief in a just world. In M. R. Leary & R. H. Hoyle (Eds.), *Handbook of individual differences in social behavior* (pp. 288–297). Guilford Press.

Duckitt, J. (1989). Authoritarianism and group identification: A new view of an old construct. *Political Psychology, 10*(1), 63–84. https://doi.org/10.2307/3791588

Duckitt, J. (2001). A dual process cognitive-motivational theory of ideology and prejudice. In M. P. Zanna (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 33, pp. 41–113). Academic Press. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601(01)80004-6

Duckitt, J. (2005). Personality and prejudice. In J. F. Dovidio, P. Glick, & L. A. Rudman (Eds.), *On the nature of prejudice: Fifty years after allport* (pp. 395–412). Blackwell Publishing. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1002/9780470773963.ch24

Duckitt, J., Wagner, C., du Plessis, I., & Birum, I. (2002). The psychological bases of ideology and prejudice: Testing a dual process model. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 83*(1), 75–93. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.83.1.75

Durrheim, K. (1997). Theoretical conundrum: The politics and science of theorizing authoritarian cognition. *Political Psychology, 18*(3), 625–647. https://doi.org/10.1111/0162-895X.00070

Edwards, A. L. (1941). Unlabeled fascist attitudes. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 36*(4), 575–582. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0062075

Falkenbach, D. (2007). Psychopathic traits in juveniles. In D. W. Springer & A. R. Roberts (Eds.), *Handbook of forensic mental health with victims and offenders: Assessment, treatment, and research* (pp. 225–246). Springer.

Feldman, S. (2003). Enforcing social conformity: A theory of authoritarianism. *Political Psychology, 24*(1), 41–74. https://doi.org/10.1111/0162-895X.00316

Freyth, L., Batinic, B., & Jonason, P. K. (2023). Social media use and personality: Beyond self-reports and trait-level assessments. *Personality and Individual Differences, 202*(1), Article 111960. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2022.111960

Furnham, A. (2003). Belief in a just world: Research progress over the past decade. *Personality and Individual Differences, 34*(5), 795–817. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0191-8869(02)00072-7

Grigoropoulos, I. (2024). Unraveling the intrapersonal factors related to infidelity: The predictive value of light and dark personality traits in a convenient Greek women sample. *Sexuality & Culture, 28*, 400–424. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-023-10123-w

Hair, J. F., Jr., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R. E. (2010). *Multivariate data analysis* (7th ed.). Pearson Prentice Hall.

Hu, L.-t., & Bentler, P. M. (1998). Cutoff criteria for fit indexes in covariance structure analysis: Conventional criteria versus new alternatives. *Structural Equation Modeling, 6*(1), 1–55. https://doi.org/10.1080/10705519909540118

Hunter, J. E., Gerbing, D. W., & Boster, F. J. (1982). Machiavellian beliefs and personality: Construct invalidity of the Machiavellianism dimension. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 43*(6), 1293–1305. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.43.6.1293

Jonason, P. K., & Webster, G. D. (2010). The dirty dozen: A concise measure of the dark triad. *Psychological Assessment, 22*(2), 420–432. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0019265

Jonason, P. K., Li, N. P., & Czarna, A. Z. (2013). Quick and dirty: Some psychosocial costs associated with the Dark Triad in three countries. *Evolutionary Psychology, 11*(1), 172–185. https://doi.org/10.1177/147470491301100116

Jonason, P. K., Lyons, M., & Bethell, E. (2014). The making of Darth Vader: Parent–child care and the Dark Triad. *Personality and Individual Differences, 67*, 30–34. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2013.10.006

Jones, D. N., & Paulhus, D. L. (2009). Machiavellianism. In M. R. Leary & R. H. Hoyle (Eds.), *Handbook of individual differences in social behavior* (pp. 93–108). The Guilford Press.

Jones, D. N., & Paulhus, D. L. (2010). Different provocations trigger aggression in narcissists and psychopaths. *Social Psychological & Personality Science, 1*(1), 12–18. https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550609347591

Jones, D. N., & Paulhus, D. L. (2014). Introducing the Short Dark Triad (SD3): A brief measure of dark personality traits. *Assessment, 21*(1), 28–41. https://doi.org/10.1177/1073191113514105

Jost, J., & Hunyady, O. (2002). The psychology of system justification and the palliative function of ideology. *European Review of Social Psychology, 13*(1), 111–153. https://doi.org/10.1080/10463280240000046

Kaufman, S. B., Yaden, D. B., Hyde, E., & Tsukayama, E. (2019). The Light vs. Dark Triad of personality: Contrasting two very different profiles of human nature. *Frontiers in Psychology, 10*, Article 467. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.00467

Koehn, M. A., Okan, C., & Jonason, P. K. (2019). A primer on the dark triad traits. *Australian Journal of Psychology, 71*(1), 7–15. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajpy.12198

Kreindler, S. A. (2005). A dual group processes model of individual differences in prejudice. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 9*(2), 90–107. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327957pspr0902_1

Lambert, A. J., Burroughs, T., & Nguyen, T. (1999). Perceptions of risk and the buffering hypothesis: The role of just world beliefs and right-wing authoritarianism. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 25*(6), 643–656. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167299025006001

Lerner, M. J. (1965). Evaluation of performance as a function of performer's reward and attractiveness. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1*(4), 355–360. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0021806

Lerner, M. J. (1980). *The belief in a just world: A fundamental delusion*. Plenum. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4899-0448-5

Lerner, M. J., & Miller, D. T. (1978). Just world research and the attribution process: Looking back and ahead. *Psychological Bulletin, 85*(5), 1030–1051. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.85.5.1030

Loevinger, J. (1976). *Ego development: Conceptions and theories*. Jossey-Bass.

McCann, S. J., & Stewin, L. L. (1987). Threat, authoritarianism, and the power of U.S. presidents. *The Journal of Psychology, 121*(2), 149–157. https://doi.org/10.1080/00223980.1987.9712652

McDonald, M. M., Donnellan, M. B., & Navarrete, C. D. (2012). A life history approach to understanding the Dark Triad. *Personality and Individual Differences, 52*(5), 601–605. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2011.12.003

Oesterreich, D. (2005). Flight into security: A new approach and measure of the authoritarian personality. *Political Psychology, 26*(2), 275–298. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9221.2005.00418.x

Onraet, E., & Van Hiel, A. (2013). When threat to society becomes a threat to oneself: Implications for right-wing attitudes and ethnic prejudice. *International Journal of Psychology, 48*(1), 25–34. https://doi.org/10.1080/00207594.2012.701747

Paulhus, D. L., & Williams, K. M. (2002). The Dark Triad of personality: Narcissism, Machiavellianism and psychopathy. *Journal of Research in Personality, 36*(6), 556–563. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0092-6566(02)00505-6

Persson, B. N., Kajonius, P. J., & Garcia, D. (2019). Revisiting the structure of the Short Dark Triad. *Assessment, 26*(1), 3–16. https://doi.org/10.1177/1073191117701192

Peterson, R. D., & Palmer, C. L. (2021). The dark is rising: Contrasting the Dark Triad and Light Triad on measures of political ambition and participation. *Frontiers in Political Science, 3*, Article 657750. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2021.657750

Rauthmann, J. F., & Will, T. (2011). Proposing a multidimensional Machiavellianism conceptualization. *Social Behavior and Personality, 39*(3), 391–403. https://doi.org/10.2224/sbp.2011.39.3.391

Rauthmann, J. F., & Kolar, G. P. (2012). How "dark" Are the Dark Triad Traits? Examining the perceived darkness of Narcissism, Machiavellianism, and Psychopathy. *Personality and Individual Differences, 53*(7), 884–889. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2012.06.020

Soper, D. S. (2020). *A-priori sample size calculator for structural equation models.* http://www.danielsoper.com/statcalc

Stroebe, W., & Stroebe, M. (1995). *Social psychology and health.* Brooks/Cole.

Swami, V., & Barron, D. (2019). Translation and validation of body image instruments: Challenges, good practice guidelines, and reporting recommendations for test adaptation. *Body Image, 31*, 204–220. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2018.08.014

Tzogopoulos, G. (2016). *The Greek crisis in the media: Stereotyping in the international press.* Routledge.

van den Bos, K., & Lind, E. A. (2002). Uncertainty management by means of fairness judgments. In M. P. Zanna (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (pp. 1–60). Academic Press. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601(02)80003-X

Van Hiel, A., Duriez, B., & Kossowska, M. (2006). The presence of leftwing authoritarianism in Western Europe and its relationship with conservative ideology. *Political Psychology, 27*(5), 769–793. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9221.2006.00532.x

Vernon, P. A., Villani, V. C., Vickers, L. C., & Harris, J. A. (2008). A Behavioral Genetic Investigation of the Dark Triad and the Big 5. *Personality and Individual Differences, 44*(2), 445–452. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2007.09.007

Wilson, E. O. (1975). *Sociobiology: The new synthesis.* Belknap Press of Harvard U Press.

Zakrisson, I. (2005). Construction of a short version of the right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) scale. *Personality and Individual Differences, 39*(5), 863–872. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2005.02.026