

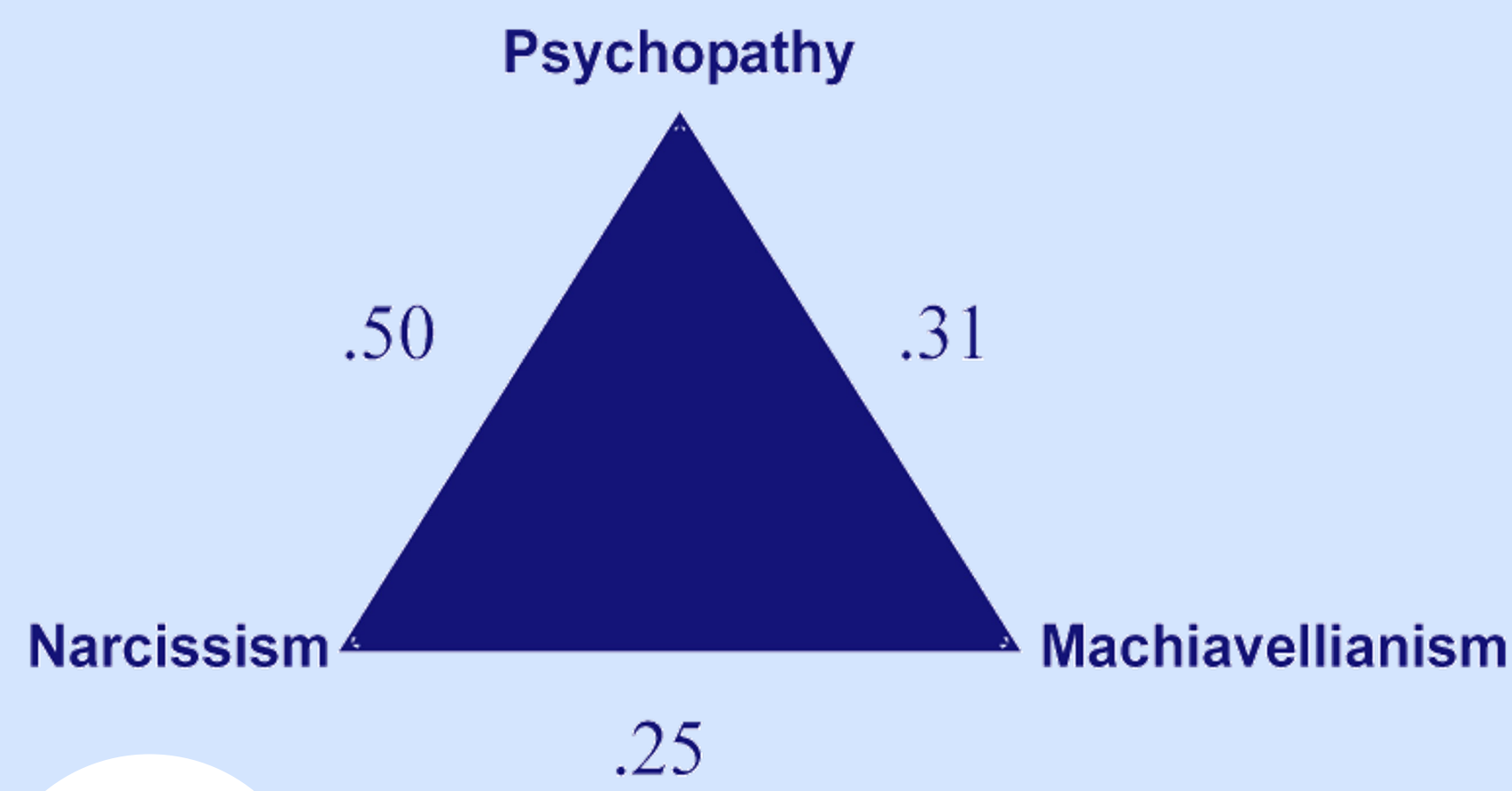
# Thriving or just surviving? The role of the Dark Triad traits in Mental Toughness and Psychosocial Flourishing

Megan Bamforth

## Definitions: The Dark Triad traits

The Dark Triad (DT) composes of the three personality traits (Paulhus & Williams, 2002):

- **subclinical narcissism**
- **subclinical psychopathy**
- **Machiavellianism**



### Subclinical Narcissism

An extreme self absorption.

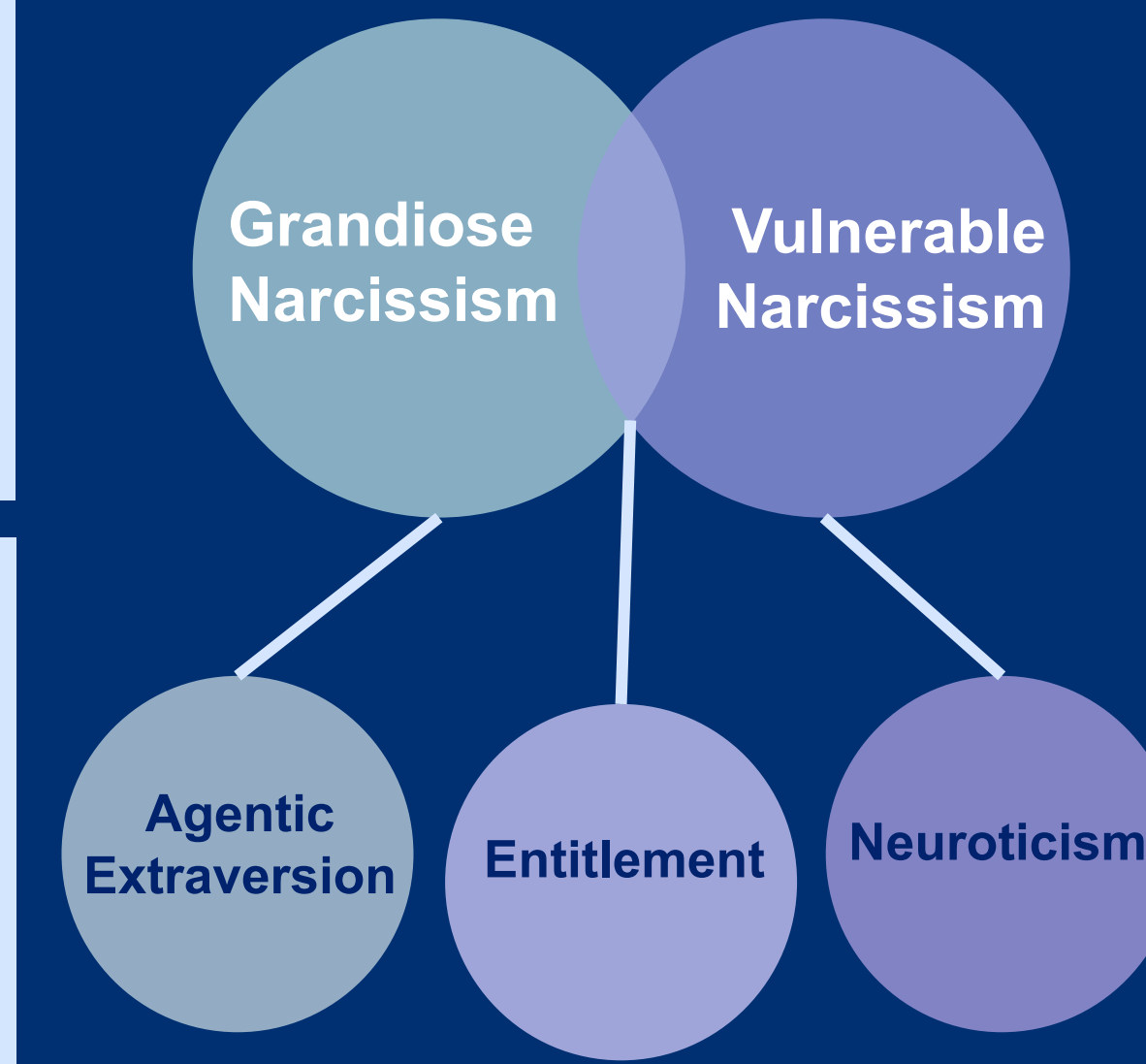
However, it has been **subcategorised** into grandiose and vulnerable narcissism as they both entail extreme self-absorption yet present differently (Miller et al., 2011).

#### Grandiose Narcissism

An extraverted, assertive, self-perceived superiority (Miller et al., 2011).

#### Vulnerable Narcissism

An introverted, defensive, self-perceived fragility (Miller et al., 2011).

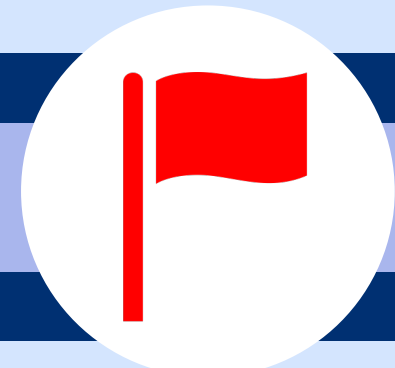


### Subclinical Psychopathy

A lack of empathy, high impulsivity, insincerity and manipulation (Roy & Neumann, 2022).

### Machiavellianism

An immoral manipulation of others to gain power (Monaghan et al., 2018).



## BEWARE the Dark Triad!

Previous research predominantly focuses on the **negative, maladaptive behaviours** of the Dark Triad traits, despite **potential positive adaptive aspects** (Furnham et al., 2013). Media have branded these as **'red flag behaviours'** and that these **'bad'** people are found in the general population, and to **'beware'** of these people (Pattillo, 2020). This has created a **negative stigma** (Pfeffer, 2021).

## Definitions: Wellbeing Measures

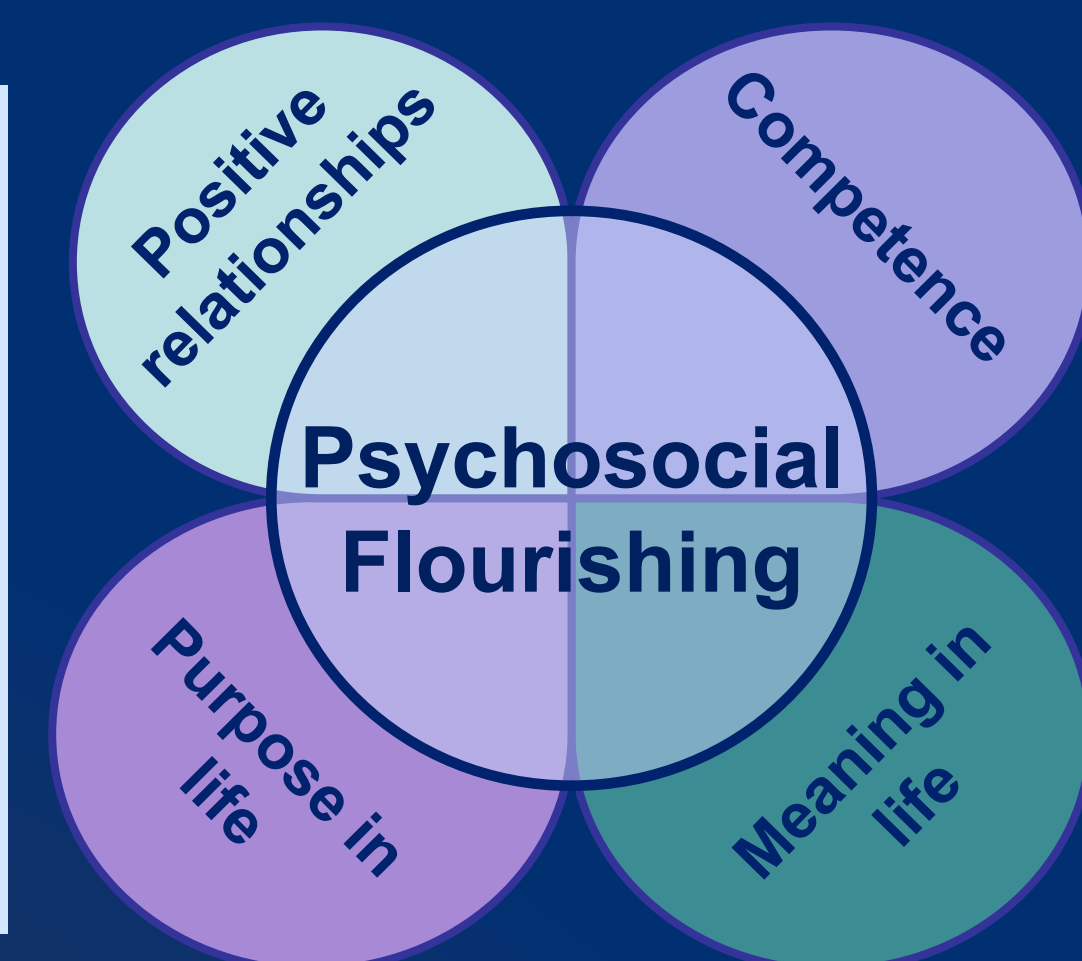


### Mental Toughness (MT)

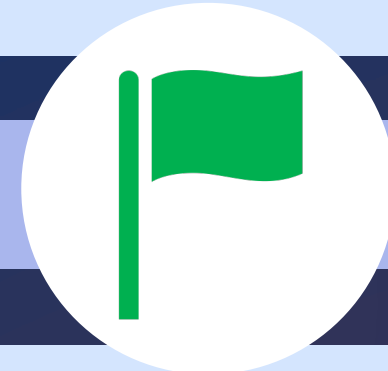
The ability to navigate stressors and push through adversity, combining aspects of resilience with goal-pursuit (Jhamb & Kataria, 2023).

### Psychosocial Flourishing (PSF)

A self-perceived life success and wellbeing (Diener et al., 2010).



## Is it all 'bad'?



A rise in literature has investigated the **success** (Spurk et al., 2016) and **wellbeing** of people with higher levels of the DT traits (Aghababaei & Blachnio, 2015), however they had not been researched together.

To **balance the bias literature**, it provides scope to investigate whether an aspect of wellbeing, **Mental Toughness (MT)**, could also be related to success in life and thus also, **psychosocial flourishing (PSF)**.

As men appear to exhibit higher levels of all three DT traits (Jonason & Davis, 2018), does **gender also play a role** in the relationship between DT, MT and PSF?

## Results

- Grandiose narcissism was weakly positively associated with MT and PSF.
- Vulnerable narcissism was strongly negatively associated with MT and PSF.
- Machiavellianism was moderately negatively associated with PSF but unrelated to MT.
- Subclinical psychopathy was not related to either MT or PSF.
- MT and PSF were moderately positively associated.
- Men possessed higher levels of grandiose narcissism, subclinical psychopathy, Machiavellianism and MT.
- Women possessed higher levels of vulnerable narcissism.
- There were no gender differences in PSF.

## Aims

1. To investigate the relationship between the Dark Triad traits, Mental Toughness and Psychological Flourishing.
2. Explore gender differences.

## Methodology:

**Who?** 291 adults.

**Where?** Social media platforms.



**How?** A 15-minute online Qualtrics survey questionnaire using three scales:

- Dark Triad Index 2 (DTI-2)
- The 10-item Mental Toughness Questionnaire (MTQ-10)
- Flourishing Scale (FS)

### Analysis?

- **Correlations** between DT traits, MT and PSF.
- **Linear regressions** between DT traits, MT and PSF.
- **T-tests** to examine gender differences.

## Insights and recommendations

- Grandiose narcissism appears supportive in hardship and promote life success, emphasising the importance of self-concept.
- Individuals high in Machiavellianism and vulnerable narcissism hold negative worldviews that impact PSF and may benefit from support developing a growth mindset.
- Individuals with high levels of vulnerable narcissism appear to struggle under pressure and require targeted interventions.
- Perceived masculinity aligns with the DT traits and MT, warranting further study.
- Reframing these traits without the "dark" label could reduce stigma and help identify those needing tailored support.

## References

- Aghababaei, N., & Blachnio, A. (2015). Well-being and the Dark Triad. *Personality and individual differences*, 86, 365-368.
- Diener, E., Wirtz, D., Tov, W., Kim-Prieto, C., Choi, D., Oishi, S., & Biswas-Diener, R. (2010). New measures of well-being: Short Scales to assess Flourishing and Positive and Negative feelings. *Social Indicators Research*, 39, 247-266.
- Furnham, A., Richards, S. C., & Paulhus, D. L. (2013). The Dark Triad of personality: A 10 year review. *Social and personality psychology compass*, 7(3), 199-216.
- Jhamb, S., & Kataria, A. (2023). From Adversity to Strength? Investigating a Potential Correlation between Adversity Quotient and Mental Toughness. *IAHRW International Journal of Social Sciences Review*, 11(3), 453-456.
- Jonason, P. K., & Davis, M. D. (2018). A gender role view of the Dark Triad traits. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 125, 102-105.
- Miller, J. D., Hoffman, B. J., Gaughan, E. T., Gentile, B., Maples, J., & Keith Campbell, W. (2011). Grandiose and vulnerable narcissism: A nomological network analysis. *Journal of personality*, 79(5), 1013-1042.
- Monaghan, C., Bizumic, B., & Sellbom, M. (2018). Nomological network of two-dimensional Machiavellianism. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 130, 161-173.
- Pattillo, A. (2020, November 14). Beware the dark triad: 15 signs there's one in your office. *Inverse*. <https://www.inverse.com/blog/dark-triad-personality-traits-what-people-with-dark-triad-personality-traits-are-like>
- 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.
- Pfeffer, J. (2021). The dark triad may be not so dark: exploring why 'toxic' leaders are so common—with some implications for scholarship and education. *Psychoanalytic Inquiry*, 41(7), 540-551.
- Roy, S., & Neumann, C. S. (2022). The Self-Report Psychopathy Scale—Fourth Edition. In P. K. Jonason (Ed.) *Shining Light on the Dark Side of Personality: Measurement Properties and Theoretical Advances* (pp. 128-137). Hogrefe
- Spurk, D., Keller, A. C., & Hirschi, A. (2016). Do bad guys get ahead or fall behind? Relationships of the dark triad of personality with objective and subjective career success. *Social psychological and personality science*, 7(2), 113-121.