

**RESEARCH PAPER****Moderating role of Family System on the Relationship between Dark Triad Personality Traits and Use of Self Presentation Tactics among University Students****<sup>1</sup>Habiba Shaheen\*, <sup>2</sup>Hareem Saeed and <sup>3</sup>Samina Rashid**

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**ABSTRACT**

The goal of the current study was to assess the moderating role of the family system in the relationship between the use of assertive self-presentation tactics and dark triad personality traits among university students. The Self-Presentation Theory posits that individuals engage in self-presentation to shape others' perceptions, gain social acceptance, and achieve desired outcomes. Keeping in view current study focused on investigating the relationship between these two variables as well as to examine moderating role of family system on these variables. Using purposive sampling technique, 400 college students ( $n = 252$  females and  $n = 148$  males) between the ages of 18 and 25 were selected from Wah Cantt and Islamabad. Data was gathered using the Self-presentation techniques scale (SPTS) and the Short Dark Triad (SD3), which measures dark triad personality traits and self-presentation style. Results of the present study illustrated a significant positive correlation between dark triad and all assertive self-presentation tactics and family system moderated this relationship, males score higher than females in exhibiting dark triad traits and in the usage of assertive self-presentation tactics. Study results can be helpful for professionals to screen out Dark Triad behaviors, thus facilitating early intervention and effective treatment plans. Future researchers should focus on longitudinal studies and larger sample size for diversity.

Assertive Self-Presentation Tactics Use, Dark Triad Traits, Family System, Gender

**Keywords:** Differences, University Students**Introduction**

The University students are individuals who are pursuing higher education at a university or college. In a university where everyone is studying together, you can find students from different countries, different cultures, different societies, different backgrounds, financial level, race, and so on. Due to these demographical differences, there are a lot of differences among their attitudes, how they behave, how they carry themselves, and how they present themselves.

Different individuals will have different traits. University students come from diverse backgrounds and experiences, and as a result, they may exhibit a range of different personality traits and among them some students come up with dark triad traits.

Paulhus and Williams (2002) introduced the term Dark Triad (DT) to distinguish between three offensive yet non-pathological personalities namely; narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism. Dark Triad traits have common conceptual bases such as manipulation, a distorted view of the world, unemotional or callous approach to others

(LeBreton et al., 2018). Dark traits may cluster together given their core of self-interest in terms of their structure. For instance, some have argued that Machiavellianism and psychopathy appear to be related rather than considered distinct constructs (Miller et al., 2017). The Dark Triad is a set of three personality traits that have received significant attention in recent years: narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy. These traits are related with negative behaviors and attitudes, and can have vital impacts on an individual's life and relationships.

Narcissism is a personality trait portrayed by a grandiose sense of self-importance, a need for appreciation, and a lack of empathy for others. Narcissists often exhibit exploitative, manipulative, and entitled behaviors, and may have difficulty maintaining healthy relationships with others (Zeigler-Hill et al., 2020).

Psychopathy is a personality trait described by a lack of empathy, a devalue of other's feelings and rights, thrill-seeking and impulsive tendencies and antisocial behaviors. Individuals with psychopathy often exhibit traits such as deceitfulness, manipulateness, and a shallow affect, making it difficult for them to form and maintain meaningful relationships with others (Mathieu et al., 2020)

The construct of Machiavellianism to the subclinical measure emerged from Christie and Geis (1970). The concept of Machiavellianism comes from an Italian political philosopher Niccolo Machiavelli, who wrote extensively about use of deception and manipulation in politics. Machiavellianism is a personality trait characterized through manipulateness, cynicism, callous affect, and strategic-calculating orientation (Ozkum, 2022).

Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy are considered as highly emotionally manipulative towards others through mood worsening strategies e.g., slamming others and inauthentic strategies e.g., fawning and moping (Hyde et al., 2020). These traits share a common theme of callousness, self-interest, and manipulateness, although they differ in their underlying motivations and behaviors (Horsten et al., 2021). Machiavellianism is distinct from psychopathy in that it does not involve impulsivity or antisocial behavior, and from narcissism in that it does not involve grandiosity or entitlement (Miller et al., 2017).

Self-presentation refers to the process by which individuals strategically shape and manage the impressions they convey to others (De Silva, 2022). It involves a conscious effort to control or enhance how one is perceived, aiming to achieve specific social goals and desired outcomes. Self-presentation tactics consist of numerous behaviors and strategies employed by individuals to influence how they are perceived by others in various contexts, including interpersonal interactions, professional settings, and online platforms (Johnson, & Ranzini, 2018). Self-presentation tactics can be conscious or unconscious and can vary across individuals and situations (Hart et al., 2017).

The Self-Presentation Theory posits that individuals engage in self-presentation to shape others' perceptions, gain social acceptance, and achieve desired outcomes (Gordon, 2023). This theory emphasizes the strategic nature of self-presentation and its role in social interactions. The Impression Management Theory highlights the various strategies individuals employ to create specific impressions and control the information they reveal about themselves (De Silva, 2022). Tedeschi's theory of self-presentation divides the self-presentation tactics into two distinct categories i.e., Assertive self-presentation tactics and Defensive self-presentation tactics (Aderina, et al., 2022).

Defensive self-presentation tactics are strategies individuals employ in order to protect and maintain a positive self-image when faced with threats or challenges to their social identity or reputation (Ghasempour et al., 2023). These tactics serve as a means of

self-defense, aiming to mitigate negative evaluations, judgments, or potential harm to one's self-esteem. Excuses are when an actor verbally rejecting responsibility for negative consequences. Justifications refers to giving justifiable reasons for negative outcomes, but accepting responsibility for it (Grigorazh et al., 2021). Disclaimers refers to offering explanations before predicaments occur. When an actor intends to produce an obstacle to success in order to prevent inferences about one's failure by others is called Self-handicapping. Apologies refers to the expressions of responsibility, guilt, and remorse for any negative event or harm done to others.

Assertive self-presentation tactics encompass a set of strategies individuals employ to actively and confidently express their thoughts, opinions, and abilities in order to promote a positive self-image and achieve their desired goals in social interactions (Hart et al., 2020). Unlike defensive self-presentation tactics, which focus on protection and avoidance of negative evaluations, assertive self-presentation tactics aim to project competence, influence, and assertiveness (Reed & Saunders, 2020). Ingratiation are actions performed by an actor to be liked by others and gain advantage from them. Intimidation are actions by an actor to induce influence on others and to be appear powerful and dangerous. Supplication refers to displaying oneself as weak and dependent in order to get help from target person. Entitlement are actions of responsibility and claim by an actor in order to be credited for positive accomplishments. Enhancement is when an actor positively exaggerates the consequences of his or her actions than it might have initially. Blasting includes negative appraisals of another person or groups with which the actor is merely allied. Exemplification are actions performed by an actor in order to appear morally worthy and considered as someone having integrity.

Family system is defined as the living arrangement of more than one people who shares basic needs and emotional support from one another. In a Pakistani culture, there exists two most common types of families i.e., nuclear family system and joint family system. Baig et al., (2014) demonstrated that nuclear family system is comprised of two parents and one or more children whereas joint family system is considered as a type of extended family comprised of parents, their children, the children's spouses and offspring in one household. It was found that living arrangement or family structures has an immense impact on child's psychological, emotional, and social welfare, affecting their overall personality and lifestyle (Parveen et al., 2016).

## **Literature Review**

Dark Triad traits are related with the use of self-presentation tactics aimed at achieving personal goals and maintaining a desired image. Narcissism would link to a "grandiose self-presentation style" i.e., displaying oneself in an enhanced or elevated way, on the other hand, Machiavellianism and psychopathy would correlate to enhanced "opportunistic impression management" i.e., portraying oneself in a way to exploit opportunities for materialistic rewards. (Hart et al., 2019). These individuals possess a keen awareness of how they are perceived by others and employ manipulative strategies to influence impressions and outcomes.

Machiavellian individuals exhibit cynicism and calculated manipulative self-presentation behaviors aimed at gaining power and control over others. They skillfully navigate social situations, employing impression management techniques to manipulate perceptions and exploit opportunities for personal benefits (Jones & Paulhus, 2014). Machiavellian tactics related positively to the use of excuses, self-handicapping, ingratiation, intimidation, supplication, entitlement, self-enhancement, and blasting in favor of their egotistical and opportunistic profile (Hart et al, 2022). A study found individuals who exhibit Machiavellian traits like to view others in a submissive role and hence, are probable to avail assertive self-presentation tactics to manipulate others as to avoid themselves in a weak or submissive role (Hart et al, 2019; Copkova, 2023).

Similarly, individuals with psychopathic traits are known for their superficial charm and ability to mask their true intentions, enabling them to manipulate and exploit others. Psychopaths are antagonistic in nature and characterized by antisocial behavior, lack of remorse, empathy and disinhibited traits (Muris et al., 2017). Psychopathy seems to be relating to the enhanced use of socially daring tactics including intimidation and blasting that convey malevolence which are reliable to its antagonistic identity (Hart et al., 2020).

Narcissistic individuals, on the other hand, engage in self-enhancement strategies and seek constant validation from others to maintain their inflated self-image. Narcissists converge more to the assertive side rather than the defensive side of presentation suggesting that individuals possessing narcissistic traits use heightened use of intimidation, entitlement, enhancement, blasting, ingratiation, and exemplification to be able to sustain their power, charm, and grandiosity (Hart et al. 2019). Another study explored the profiles of grandiose and vulnerable narcissist's self-presentation tactic use, using a male sample and concluded that grandiose narcissism is linked with high use of assertive tactics while vulnerable narcissism is linked with the use of both assertive and defensive self-presentation tactics (Hart et al, 2017).

According to Cowan & Cowan (2002), difficult and unsuccessful parent-child and marital relationships disrupt children's cognitive, social, and emotional problems in childhood and adolescence which means if a child belongs to a non-functioning family (divorced parents), other than nuclear or extended family, it is to be believed that the child is vulnerable towards emotional, cognitive, and social problems throughout his/her life. Parental attachment suggestively moderates the relationship among family structure and youth delinquency. Youth belonging from unbroken family structure reports high levels of parental attachment and were less antisocial than those reporting lower levels of attachment in various other family structures (Freemon et al., 2023).

Despite extensive research examining the connection of dark triad traits and self-presentation tactics use, it remains uncertain whether family structures have an impact on the association among dark traits and self-presentation tactics. To report this gap in literature, the existing study examines the moderating effect of family structures of university students on the relationship between dark triad and self-presentation tactics.

Considering the above gaps in the previous knowledge, the present investigation intends to communicate these gaps among Pakistani context. By highlighting the gaps, this research aims to provide to a better comprehension of psychological behaviors of students which are indicative of dark triad and motives behind certain tactics which facilitates educators and professionals towards early intervention and effective treatment plans. Hence, this research investigates the relationship among dark triad and assertive presentation tactics usage (excluding the defensive presentation tactics) with the moderating role of family system.

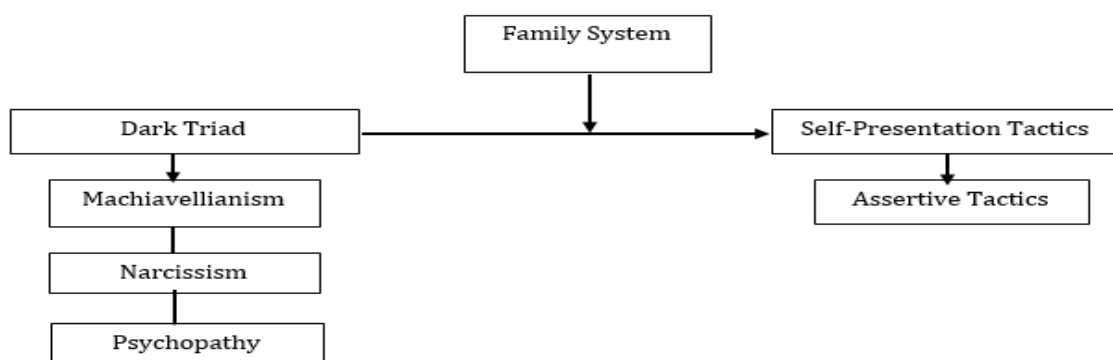


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

## Hypotheses

Following Hypotheses were formulated to meet the aims of the current study:

1. Dark triad personality traits are positively correlated to the usage of assertive self-presentation tactics.
2. Narcissism is positively correlated with ingratiation, intimidation, entitlement, enhancement, supplication, blasting, and exemplification.
3. Psychopathy is positively correlated with ingratiation, intimidation, supplication, entitlement, enhancement, blasting, and exemplification.
4. There is positive correlation between Machiavellianism and all assertive self-presentation tactics.
5. Family system moderates the relationship between Dark triad and Assertive self-presentation tactics.

## Material and Methods

### Research Design

The present study was a correlational study based on cross-sectional research design.

### Sample

Using the non-probability sampling (purposive sampling), a sample of 400 university students ( $N=400$ ) from residential area of Islamabad and Wah Cantt, participated in the present study. Sample consisted of  $n=148$  males and  $n=252$  female university students of both nuclear and joint family system. Age range of all participants were from 18-25. Regarding demographic variables, there were both men (37.0%) and women (63.0%). 37.0 % age range was 20-21. Most applicants (87.5%) have education up to Bachelor's level. Most of the participants (68.3%) belonged to nuclear family system. Moreover, regarding family's social economic status, most of the participants (92.0%) belonged to middle class status (Table 1).

**Table 1**  
**Demographic characteristics of the participants (N=400)**

Variables	f	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	148	37.0
Female	252	63.0
<b>Age</b>		
18-19	73	18.3
20-21	148	37.0
22-23	137	34.3
24-25	42	10.5
<b>Education</b>		
BS	350	87.5
MS	29	7.5
PhD	14	3.5
Others	7	1.8
<b>Family system</b>		
Nuclear	273	68.3
Joint	127	31.8
<b>Family's social economic status</b>		
Lower class	10	2.5

Middle class	368	92.0
Upper class	22	5.5

Note: *f*= frequency, % =percentage

## Instruments

### The Short Dark Triad (SD3)

SD3 is applied to determine three socially aversive personality traits (Jones & Paulhus, 2014). The scale comprises of 27 items and as three subscales; Narcissism, Machiavellianism, and Psychopathy, each consists of 9 items. Applicants were requested to respond questions in 5-point likert scale varying from 1= Disagree strongly, 2= Disagree, 3= Neither agree nor disagree, 4= Agree, and 5= Agree strongly. Alpha reliabilities for the SD3 subscales are 0.71, 0.77, and 0.80 for Narcissism, Machiavellianism, and Psychopathy respectively. Cronbach Alpha for complete scale is 0.88. The present study excluded the item "I enjoy having sex with people I hardly know" from the subscale of psychopathy because of its inappropriateness towards Pakistani culture, hence making SD3 of total 26 items.

### The Self-Presentation Tactics Scale (SPTS)

SPTS is used to measure the use of different self-presentation tactics (Lee et al., 1999). The scale entails of 64 items and 12 subscales measuring two broad self-presentation categories; defensive and assertive self-presentation tactics. The present-day research utilized the assertive category of self-presentation tactics from the SPTS, which is composed of 38 items covering all the assertive tactics one might use. Participants will be asked to respond items in 9-point likert scale varying from 1= very infrequently to 9= very frequently. The Cronbach alpha indicated good internal reliability of the scale assessing 12 self-presentation tactics. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.91 for the assertive self-presentation tactic subscale, the whole Self-Presentation Tactics Scale was found to be 0.93.

## Procedure

Participants were approached for the collection data. Informed consent was taken and participants were ensured about their confidentiality of the given information as the information was utilized only for the intention of research. Instructions were given to the respondents that there are no correct or incorrect answers for the items and there was no deadline for completing the questionnaires. They were asked to answer each question and to select not more than single option for each statement. Afterwards data collection, all surveys were inspected for absent information and participants were acknowledged with appreciation.

## Results and Discussion

The existing study tend to examine the moderating role of family system on the relationship between dark triad personality traits and assertive self-presentation tactics among university students. The analysis solely included respondents who have completed the entire survey.

Descriptive statistics demonstrates number of items, Cronbach's alpha, mean, standard deviation, range (potential, actual), skewness, and kurtosis for scales. Cronbach's alpha illustrated the good reliability values, which depicts internal consistency of all scales. The skewness and kurtosis values were in between the range of +2- -2 fulfilling the postulation of normal distribution (Table 2).

**Table 2**

**Descriptive statistics for the study variables.**

Variables	K	$\alpha$	MEAN	SD	Range		Skewness	Kurtosis
					Actual	Potential		
SD3	26	.79	79.06	11.71	47-110	26-130	.03	-.12
ASPT	38	.92	155.04	43.55	46-305	38-342	.05	-.08
ING	8	.79	35.68	11.92	8-64	8-72	.01	-.56
INT	5	.79	17.29	8.36	5-41	5-45	.49	-.44
SUP	5	.69	18.28	7.09	5-43	5-45	.42	.11
ENT	5	.73	20.00	7.90	5-45	5-45	.08	-.59
ENH	5	.79	22.14	8.40	5-43	5-45	-.11	-.53
BLA	5	.82	17.43	8.78	5-45	5-45	.51	-.29
EXE	5	.80	24.21	8.72	5-45	5-45	-.12	-.58
MACH	9	.75	29.22	6.34	13-44	9-45	-.34	-.00
NARC	9	.63	26.74	4.73	12-43	9-45	.09	.40
PSYCH	8	.66	23.09	4.98	8-35	8-40	-.08	-.14

Note: K= number of items,  $\alpha$ = Cronbach's alpha, SD= standard deviation, SD3= Short Dark Triad Scale, ASPT= Assertive Self-Presentation Tactic, ING= Ingratiation, INT= Intimidation, SUP= Supplication, ENT= Entitlement, ENH= Enhancement, BLA= Blasting, EXE= Exemplification, MACH= Machiavellianism, NARC= Narcissism, PSYCH= Psychopathy.

Correlation coefficient was calculated in order to determine the association of studied variables. (Table 3). Findings indicated a significant positive correlation between Machiavellianism and all assertive self-presentation tactics, which means that students with Machiavellianism traits will show assertive self-presentation tactics. Table further depicts that Narcissism and all assertive self-presentation tactics are significantly positively correlated with one another except intimidation, which indicates that narcissistic students will use all assertive self-presentation tactics except for intimidation. Table also indicates that Psychopathy and assertive self-presentation tactics are significantly positively correlated with each other, which means that students with tendencies of psychopathy will present themselves assertively.

**Table 3**  
**Pearson correlation among Dark triad and Self-presentation tactics scale.**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1 SD3	-	.75**	.69**	.73**	.49**	.41**	.27**	.23**	.39**	.46**	.35**	.28**
2 MACH		-	.22**	.27**	.34**	.39**	.18**	.14**	.20**	.37**	.17**	.15**
3 NARC			-	.39**	.31**	.24**	.06	.14**	.31**	.28**	.20**	.29**
4 PSYCH				-	.42**	.24**	.34**	.22**	.35**	.34**	.41**	.18**
5 SPTS					-	.76**	.66**	.68**	.79**	.80**	.69**	.56**
6 ING						-	.45**	.46**	.47**	.56**	.33**	.34**
7 INT							-	.40**	.37**	.47**	.57**	.07
8 SUP								-	.49**	.37**	.50**	.26**
9 ENT									-	.69**	.48**	.48**
10 ENH										-	.45**	.41**
11 BLA											-	.22**
12 EXE												-

\*\* $p < 0.01$ , SD3= Short Dark Triad Scale, SPTS= Self-Presentation Tactic Scale, ING= Ingratiation, INT= Intimidation, SUP= Supplication, ENT= Entitlement, ENH= Enhancement, BLA= Blasting, EXE= Exemplification, MACH= Machiavellianism, NARC= Narcissism, PSYCH= Psychopathy.

In order to measure the influence of family system on Dark Triad and Self-Presentation Tactics, Moderation analysis was carried out. Results revealed that family system moderated the relationship of dark triad and self-presentation tactics. The values demonstrated that family system weakens the relationship between the reserached variables, i.e. family system will lower the use of assertive self-presentation tactics among students with dark triad (Table 4). Comprehensive effect of moderation has been shown in figure 2 by modgraph. Modgraph indicated the perfect moderating effect of family system in

the relationship between dark triad personality trait and self-presentation tactics. It can be observed from the figure that lesser usage of self-presentation tactics is associated with having high dark triad personality traits at both types of family systems. However, for nuclear family system this increase is more evident. This indicated that participants belonging to nuclear family system tend to possess darker traits.

**Table 4**  
**Moderating role of Family system in relationship between Dark Triad Traits and Self-Presentation Tactics.**

Variables	Assertive Self-Presentation Tactics		95% CI	
	$\beta$	P	LL	UL
Constant	-8.12	.60	-38.63	22.39
SD3	2.06	.00	1.68	2.44
FS	61.17	.03	5.85	116.49
Int	-.78	.02***	-1.47	-.08
R <sup>2</sup>	.25			
F	44.46			
$\Delta$ R <sup>2</sup>	.01			

Note: SD3=Short dark triad scale, FS= Family system,  $p < .05$ ,  $\beta$ = Beta value, CI= Class Interval,  $p$ =Significance level, LL=Lower limit, UL=Upper limit

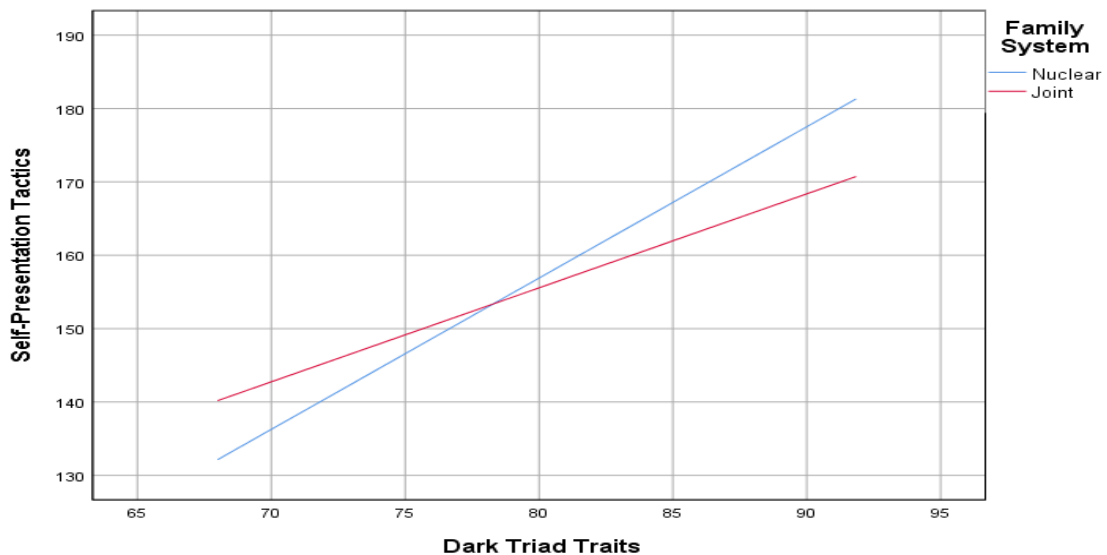


Figure 2. Moderating role of family system in the relationship between dark triad and assertive self-presentation tactics

Mean comparison of students based on gender (male and female) on all studied variables was performed (Table 5). Results depicted non-significant mean difference in male and female on Machiavellianism, which revealed that no gender difference exists on Machiavellianism. The value of cohen's d was 0.13 which indicated small effect size. Results further revealed significant mean differences in male and female for Narcissism and Psychopathy at the level of ( $p < 0.01$ ) which showed that male students have greater tendencies of narcissism and psychopathy as compared to female students. The value of cohen's d 0.34 and 0.60 respectively indicated small to moderate effect size. Results further depicted a significant mean difference in male and female on all assertive self-presentation tactics except Exemplification, which indicated that males use all assertive self-presentation tactics more as compared to female students and no gender difference exists on Exemplification. The values of cohen's d for all assertive self-presentation tactics indicated small effect size.

**Table 5**



### Mean Comparison of students on the basis of Gender on Dark Triad Traits and Self-Presentation Tactics (N= 400).

Variables	Male (n=148)		Female (n=252)		t	p	95%CI		Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL	
MACH	29.77	6.60	28.90	6.18	521.38	.18	-.42	2.15	.13
NARC	27.75	4.73	26.15	4.64	1305.44	.00	.63	2.54	.34
PSYCH	24.93	4.93	22.01	4.69	2344.22	.00	1.94	3.89	.60
ING	37.81	11.68	34.43	11.91	1094.5	.00	.96	5.78	.26
INT	19.52	8.58	15.98	7.96	1659.66	.00	.84	1.87	.42
SUP	19.42	6.86	17.61	7.14	987.04	.01	.37	3.24	.25
ENT	21.39	7.47	19.71	8.04	1086.54	.00	.62	3.81	.21
ENH	24.30	7.84	20.87	8.47	1595.98	.00	1.75	5.11	.42
BLA	19.51	8.98	16.20	8.44	1468.62	.00	1.54	5.06	.37
EXE	25.21	8.96	23.62	8.54	700.48	.07	-.17	3.36	.18

Note. M=Mean, S.D= Standard Deviation, ING= Ingratiation, INT= Intimidation, SUP= Supplication, ENT= Entitlement, ENH= Enhancement, BLA= Blasting, EXE= Exemplification, MACH= Machiavellianism, NARC= Narcissism, PSYCH= Psychopathy. P is significance level= \*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.000

### Discussion

The contemporary study intended to observe the affiliation between dark triad personality traits and assertive self-presentation tactics use among university students. Additionally, the goal of the study was to scrutinize the gender differences and also to investigate the moderation of family system on the relationship among dark triad and self-presentation tactics.

The present study hypothesized that dark triad personality traits are positively correlated to the usage of assertive self-presentation tactics. Current findings revealed a significant positive correlation between dark triad traits and assertive self-presentation tactics. Conclusions of the existing study are in accord with the previous researches as Copkova (2023) conducted a study on role of dark triad and perceived socioeconomic status in self-esteem maintaining on choosing assertive or defensive self-presentation. Results demonstrated that individuals having dark triad traits are more persuaded towards assertive self-presentation tactics that support their self-image as their central value which means that dark triad traits are significantly positively associated with each other. Another study examined profile comparison of dark triad and self-presentation tactics usage and tactic belief. Results revealed that dark triad constructs are linked to heightened practice of all self-presentation tactics apart from for exemplification and apologies which means that dark triad personality traits have positive relationship with all self-presentation tactics i.e. assertive and defensive excluding for pro-social tactics such as exemplification and apologies (Hart et al., 2019).

The study additionally hypothesized that narcissism is positively correlated with ingratiation, intimidation, entitlement, enhancement, blasting, supplication, and exemplification. Current findings revealed a significant positive correlation among narcissism and the use of all assertive self-presentation tactics however results revealed that there is non-significant relation between narcissism and intimidation. Findings of present-day study are in accord with previous researches as Hart et al. (2017) investigated the Narcissism and self-presentation, profiling grandiose and vulnerable Narcissist's self-presentation tactic use. Results demonstrated vulnerable narcissism related to five of the assertive tactics except to exemplification or intimidation, which means that individuals high in vulnerable narcissism do not engage in exerting power over others and putting a role model status. Kamhia and Unanoğlu. (2021) conducted a study on the affiliation among dark personality traits and impression management of employees at small and medium

companies in Riyadh. Results illustrated that narcissism positively correlated with all impression management including ingratiation, supplication, exemplification, and self-promotion which means that narcissists are more likely to use ingratiation, supplication, exemplification, and self-promotion. Another study was conducted on profile comparison of grandiose and vulnerable narcissism on the usage of self-presentation tactic. Results demonstrated that grandiose narcissism linked to all the assertive strategies excluding supplication. This study also showed positive correlation of narcissism with exemplification which indicates that narcissism connects with ideas that seem reliable by means of intend to projecting a "role-model" status, signifying role-model status is undoubtedly equivalent to grandiose narcissism (Hart et al., 2019).

The research study hypothesized that psychopathy is positively correlated with ingratiation, intimidation, supplication, entitlement, enhancement, blasting, and exemplification. Findings of the current study revealed psychopathy is significantly positively associated with all assertive self-presentation tactics. Conclusions of the current research are harmony with prior studies such as Hart et al. (2022) explored profiles of dark triad concepts blend facets with diverse self-presentation strategies usage. Results revealed that psychopathy linked positively to self-handicapping, ingratiation, intimidation, supplication, entitlement, self-enhancement, and blasting strategies which means that psychopathy has significantly positive relationship with six out of seven assertive tactics. Hart et al. (2020) conducted a study on describing HEXACO factors on usage of self-presentation strategies. Results demonstrated that Honesty-Humility from HEXACO factor shares strong relations with Psychopathy and Machiavellianism and indicated that Honesty-Humility correlated positively to a general indicator of exemplification which means that individuals depicting greater tendencies to involve in exemplification in areas like social relationships, church, are high in Honesty-Humility. Another study explored the association among dark personality characters and impression management of personnel at small and medium companies in Riyadh. Results demonstrated that psychopathy positively correlated with all impression management including ingratiation, supplication, exemplification, and self-promotion which means that individuals owning psychopathic traits are more expected to use ingratiation, supplication, exemplification, and self-promotion (Kamhia & Unanoglu, 2021).

The study further hypothesized that there is positive correlation between Machiavellianism and all assertive self-presentation tactics. Current findings revealed that Machiavellianism is significantly positively correlated with the usage of all assertive self-presentation tactics. Results of the present research are consistent with the previous researches. Hart et al. (2022) conducted a study to explore profiles of dark triad paradigms blend facets with diverse strategies of self-presentation usage. Results demonstrated that Machiavellianism related positively to excuses, self-handicapping, ingratiation, intimidation, supplication, entitlement, self-enhancement, blasting tactics and inversely to apologies which indicates that individuals with Machiavellian traits are more probable to occupy in assertive tactics. Another study explored the dark triad at workplace and toxic behaviors of workers. Results demonstrated that Machiavellian employees have higher tendencies to alter self-presentation which depicts they may attempt to generate any appearance to influence others. This favors them in attaining high-status occupation by portraying themselves as a sturdy confident leader (Jonason et al, 2012).

The study further hypothesized that gender differences exist among Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and narcissism and all assertive self-presentation tactics. Current findings of the research discovered significant gender differences exist on narcissism and psychopathy but further revealed the non-significant gender differences on Machiavellianism which means that males exhibit more dark triad traits than females. Results of present study are constant with the previous researches as Ozturk (2021) conducted a study to examine the moderating part of gender in the effect of the dark triad characters on counterproductive workplace behavior. Results revealed that male

employees exhibit more dark traits than that of female employees, and increase in these dark tendencies results in counterproductive work behaviors to a greater extent in male employees. Another study investigated the dark triad personality and results suggested that males scores higher on all three of the dark triad which means that males have greater tendencies to exhibit dark personality traits as compared to females (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). Another study investigated the Machiavellianism, character perfectionism, and perfectionistic self-presentation. Results revealed Machiavellianism allied by perfectionistic self-praise, non-disclosure of inadequacy, and non-flaunting of inadequacy for both genders which means that there is non-significant gender difference on Machiavellianism (Sherry et al., 2006).

While on self-presentation tactics, there exists a significant gender difference among all assertive tactics except for exemplification which means that males utilize more assertive self-presentation tactics as compared to females. Conclusions of the present-day study are consistent with preceding researches as Lee et al. (1999) conducted a research on the advancement of self-presentation strategies scale. Results revealed that there is a substantial gender change on the usage of assertive self-presentation tactics and no significant gender changes on the usage of exemplification strategies exists which means that males practice all assertive tactics than females except for exemplification. Another study was conducted to explore the tactics used to control the impression others form of us. Results demonstrated that there is significant mean difference amid males and females in the usage of self-promotion (enhancement) and intimidation tactics but non-significant differences exist in the usage of exemplification, supplication, and ingratiation (Ujhelyi et al., 2019).

The research additionally hypothesized that family structure moderates the association among dark triad and assertive self-presentation tactics. Current findings demonstrated that family system moderates the association among dark triad and assertive self-presentation strategies suggesting family system weakens the relationship among the two variables. Conclusions of the present research are constant with earlier researches as Freemon et al. (2022) conducted a study to investigate the Family structures and criminal behavior, considering the role of parental relation. Results revealed that family structure correlates with violent offending and property crime and found noteworthy variances in crime involvement among youth from unbroken families than different kinds of family structures. Youth belonging to unbroken families involved in less violent and property crimes than youth belonging to various family structures.

However, there was less literature available that investigated the moderating role of family system on the association among dark triad and self-presentation tactics use. There were no past researches that surveyed moderating role of family system on the study variable within Pakistani culture. So, this result proved to be a novel advancement to the future literature.

### **Limitations**

1. It is difficult to attribute causality to the relationship among dark triad and self-presentation tactics due the research's correlational design.
2. The information was gathered from university students of Wah Cantt and Islamabad through purposive sampling. For this reason, the findings cannot be generalized to the whole population of Pakistan.
3. Present study only studied assertive self-presentation tactics.

### **Implications**

1. Self-presentation strategies and Dark Triad features have an impact on psychological evaluation and diagnosis. This information can be used by professionals to spot behaviors that are indicative of the Dark Triad, thus facilitating early intervention and the creation of effective treatment plans.
2. Recognizing the link between Dark Triad characteristics and self-presentation strategies can affect how students are viewed in educational settings. Findings of the current study enables educational psychologists to understand dark characteristics of students and can evaluate their actions and behaviors.
3. This study can help counselors in educational settings to identify psychopaths in students and different tactics they may use in performing tasks.
4. Current study findings can have practical applications in organizations that may be interested in identifying and screening for these traits during recruitment processes to minimize the risk of hiring students who may engage in destructive behaviors.
5. Study findings help researchers better understand the motivations and interpersonal strategies shown by students with these traits. This understanding can contribute to theories of personality, social psychology, and related fields.

### **Conclusion**

The present research was directed to scrutinize the moderating role of family system among the association of dark triad and self-presentation tactics. Current study revealed that students who possess high darker traits tend to engage in assertive self-presentation tactics. Male students showed to exhibit dark traits to a greater extent comparatively to that of female students. It also revealed that students who belong to a nuclear family system tend to possess dark traits and engage in assertive tactics to display oneself in a society.

### **Recommendations**

1. Future researchers are recommended to opt for longitudinal studies for better and more in-depth study.
2. Future researches should increase the sample size from additional cities for diversity.
3. Future researchers are suggested to include defensive self-presentation tactics also to better understand the affiliation among dark triad and self-presentation tactics.

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