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PSYCHOPATHIC COMPONENT OF THE DARK TRIAD AND ITS ASSOCIATIONS WITH SELECTED AGGRESSION INDICATORS IN A SAMPLE OF MILITARY PERSONNEL

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The full-scale armed conflict in Ukraine has intensified interest in the psychological conditions associated with dysregulated, hostile, and norm-transgressive forms of behavior among military personnel [1–3, 9]. Within this field, aggression acquires special analytical significance because it combines behavioral, affective, and cognitive dimensions and can be shaped both by situational strain and by more stable dispositional characteristics [2, 8]. One of the personality constructs that deserves particular attention in this context is the psychopathic component of the Dark Triad [4, 7]. Its psychological content includes interpersonal hardness, reduced empathic resonance, impulsive antagonism, and a greater readiness for conflictual engagement [4, 7]. In military settings marked by chronic tension, threat exposure, and rapid decision-making, this dispositional layer may become especially relevant for understanding variations in aggressive profile [2, 3, 9].

The aim of the present study was to examine the associations between the psychopathic component of the Dark Triad and selected indicators of aggression in a sample of military personnel. The study included 90 service members aged 20 to 44 years. Combat experience was reported by 95.6% of participants, which gave the sample a pronounced combat-context profile. Data were collected in person in paper-and-pencil format during scheduled psychodiagnostic procedures. The broader empirical design included the Short Dark Triad questionnaire (SD-3) [5], the Buss–Perry Aggression Questionnaire (BPAQ-29) [6], the Moral Disengagement Scale (MD-8), and a biographical questionnaire. The present analysis focused on the psychopathy subscale of SD-3 and its associations with the aggression spectrum derived from BPAQ-29. The statistical strategy relied on nonparametric procedures. Distribution testing in the broader study showed departures from normality for several key variables, which supported the use of Spearman's rank-order correlation as the principal method for estimating associations among the relevant indicators. Such an

approach is appropriate for the empirical structure of the dataset and provides a sufficiently stable basis for interpreting the reported links at the level of sample-based statistical associations.

The obtained results indicate a pronounced connection between psychopathy and aggression within the examined military sample. The psychopathy subscale showed a strong positive association with the overall aggression score ($\rho = 0.710$, $p < 0.001$). A similarly expressive pattern emerged for verbal aggression ($\rho = 0.673$, $p < 0.001$) and hostility ($\rho = 0.642$, $p < 0.001$). These coefficients place psychopathy among the most salient dispositional correlates within the aggression-related segment of the examined profile. In substantive terms, higher psychopathy scores co-occurred with a greater tendency toward confrontational communication, suspicion, antagonistic interpretation of interpersonal situations, and a broader aggressive disposition. This pattern deserves attention because it gives aggression a more differentiated psychological reading. In the present sample, the strongest psychopathy-related links were observed precisely in those domains that reflect chronic interpersonal tension and readiness for verbal or cognitive conflict. Such an empirical configuration suggests that the aggressive profile of part of the sample was connected not merely with immediate situational strain, but also with a deeper antagonistic disposition expressed through a harsher interpersonal style. This interpretation remains especially relevant in military settings, where service unfolds under prolonged stress, elevated vigilance, and recurrent exposure to morally and emotionally charged situations [2, 3, 9].

The findings also gain additional depth when considered alongside the broader structure of the study. Earlier analyses showed that childhood fighting was associated with higher psychopathy scores, whereas emotional loss of control was more closely tied to the general aggression spectrum. This contrast suggests that psychopathy may occupy a more dispositional position within the risk profile, while some other biographical factors are linked more directly to dysregulated aggressive responding. Such a distinction is theoretically meaningful because it points to different layers of psychological vulnerability within the same empirical field.

From a practical perspective, the obtained data may be useful for military psychology because they refine the understanding of how personality antagonism enters the aggressive profile of service members. In applied work, such results support a more differentiated view of psychological risk. Aggression in military personnel should not be treated as a unitary phenomenon [2, 8]. Its structure may include affective escalation, biographical burden, moral-cognitive self-justification, and antagonistic dispositional characteristics, which converge in different combinations across individuals. The psychopathy component, in this context, appears to mark one of the more rigid and conflict-oriented variants of this profile [4, 7].

The interpretation of these findings requires methodological caution. The sample size was moderate, the data were obtained through self-report measures, and the proportion of combat-experienced respondents was highly concentrated. The present design therefore supports the interpretation of statistical associations within the examined sample, while broader generalization requires further testing. The reported correlations should be understood as empirically meaningful links, not as evidence of

causal determination. At the same time, their strength gives the obtained pattern clear scientific value and supports continued work on the dispositional architecture of aggression in military personnel.

In conclusion, the psychopathic component of the Dark Triad showed strong positive associations with overall aggression, verbal aggression, and hostility in the examined sample of military personnel. The obtained pattern indicates that one important segment of the aggression profile in this group is tied to antagonistic dispositional characteristics marked by interpersonal hardness and conflict orientation. These findings contribute to a more precise understanding of aggression-related psychological risk in military contexts and open a productive direction for further studies involving larger samples, expanded external criteria, and a more detailed differentiation of dispositional and biographical contributions to behavioral risk.

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