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Reconceptualization of Dark Personality: Towards a New Model Without Theoretical Overlap

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	Dark personality consists of an association of various socially aversive traits: psychopathy, Machiavellianism, narcissism, etc. Although there are several models for its evaluation, the traits they encompass overlap in content. Thus, a comprehensive theoretical framework is needed, one that integrates the psychological characteristics described in the literature while avoiding overlap in their definitions. After a review of the literature and the main dark personality tools, a general definition is proposed from which eight specific traits emerge. This paper lays the theoretical foundation for a future assessment battery of socially aversive traits, which can be used in academic research as well as in various applied contexts (clinical, organizational, forensic, etc.).

Reconceptualización de la Personalidad Oscura: hacia Un Nuevo Modelo sin Solapamiento Teórico

	RESUMEN
	La personalidad oscura consiste en una asociación de distintos rasgos socialmente aversivos: psicopatía, maquiavelismo, narcisismo, etc. Si bien existen diversos modelos para su evaluación, los rasgos que los componen solapan sus contenidos entre sí. Así, se hace necesaria una propuesta teórica comprehensiva, que integre las características psicológicas descritas en la literatura, pero evitando el solapamiento en sus definiciones. Tras una revisión de la literatura y de las principales herramientas de personalidad oscura, se propone una definición general de la que surgen ocho rasgos específicos. Este trabajo sienta las bases teóricas de una futura batería de evaluación de rasgos socialmente aversivos, la cual podrá ser utilizada tanto en investigación académica como en distintos contextos aplicados (clínico, organizacional, forense, etc.).

None of the various existing conceptualizations of the concept of "evil" has been able to univocally define its nature. Whether evil is an antagonistic force to good, its mere absence or, as Nietzsche asserted, a sophistic tool to discredit the enemy, it is undeniable that people assiduously resort to this concept to describe, explain, or predict the behavior of their fellow human beings. Not surprisingly, evil is the main problem of ethics (*ethos*, habit), the philosophical discipline that discerns between good and bad behavior. If we rely on it, most authors agree that evil cannot be identified only by the consequences of its action, but that the voluntariness and the capacity of discernment of the moral agent must be taken into account. In other words, as Aristotle pointed out, only those who are responsible for their actions can commit evil actions.

Among the secular ethical theories of evil, Immanuel Kant's is probably the best known. Kant defends three degrees of malevolent intention: frailty, impurity, and perversity (Kant, 2001). In frailty, the subject wants to behave morally well, but is not strong enough to do so. In impurity, the person lets their conduct be guided by something other than morality, and in perversion, the person places their personal interests above morality.

Thus, there are many philosophers who, rather than defending evil as a cause, understand it as a voluntary departure from what is morally desirable. What is morally desirable is nothing more than a social agreement that allows the community to progress beyond the individual. In other words, malevolence is a kind of selfishness where we subordinate personal interests to social interests. This type of behavior will be repelled by society as a direct threat to its integrity. The individual must renounce their individual interests or align them with social needs in order to be accepted by others (Freud, 2010). The price of transgressing this norm will be proportional to the damage caused and will be stipulated by the judicial system for the most serious cases, which has been evident since the dawn of humanity (e.g.: Code of Ur-Nammu, dated 2,100 BC).

Given the obscurity that the word "evil" can generate when describing human behavior (Baron-Cohen, 2011), in this study it will be replaced by the term "socially aversive behavior".

The Socially Aversive in Psychology

The first psychological studies on these behaviors can be traced back to Philippe Pinel and his descriptions of antisocial personalities in the Bicêtre asylum, identifying these problems as "manias without delirium". Another classic attempt at definition comes from Prichard, with the concept of "moral insanity". Freud himself portrayed human nature in a dark light by describing human beings as an animal of antisocial impulses, which they must suppress in order to live in society (Freud, 2010). Specifically, Freud focused on excessively self-absorbed and self-aggrandizing individuals, whom he called narcissists, in reference to the Greek myth of Narcissus and Nemesis. Shortly thereafter, Hervey Cleckley coined, in the 1940s, the term "psychopathy" to refer to a psychological profile characterized by manipulation, impulsivity, emotional insensitivity, and antisocial behavior, in the absence of hallucinations or neurotic manifestations (Cleckley, 1988). This concept was later popularized by Robert Hare in his research on prison populations (Hare, 1980). On the other hand, Christie and Geis proposed, in 1970, the term "Machiavellianism" to label

insensitive subjects in interpersonal relationships, unconcerned about moral conventions and with little involvement in idealistic goals (Christie & Geis, 1970, pp. 3-4). In recent times, David T. Lykken published a study on "antisocial personalities", reflecting on their possible genetic and environmental influences and proposing a detailed classification (Lykken, 1995, p. 23). In fact, the diagnostic manuals themselves have included labels for these types of individuals, the most resounding being Antisocial Personality Disorder and Narcissistic Personality Disorder in the DSM-5 (American Psychiatric Association, 2013), known respectively as Dissocial Personality Disorder and Narcissistic Personality Disorder in the ICD-11 (World Health Organization, 2019).

However, the previous paragraph only refers to clinical or psychopathological behaviors, where these "dark" traits (so called because of their aversive social nature) are necessarily problematic for the individual. When speaking of personality traits, it does not seem appropriate to speak of them as entirely maladaptive, since, if they exist, it is probably because of their usefulness in certain contexts (Paulhus, 1998, p. 1205; Paulhus & Williams, 2002, pp. 561-562). In fact, the term "successful," "adapted" or "white-collar" psychopath (Hall & Benning, 2006) highlights their potential benefits. Research demonstrates their utility in handling difficult situations (Taylor & Armor, 1996), in generating good impressions on others (Paulhus, 1998), in gaining benefits in the workplace (Babiak & Hare, 2007; Templer, 2018), or in reaching positions of power in social hierarchies (Hodson et al., 2009).

However, it does not seem correct to refer to these traits as problematic or adaptive; this classification will depend on the specific aspect being assessed. Accordingly, the present study will not work with clinical constructs or psychopathological diagnoses, but rather the traits described will be understood as personality variables that can be identified—to a greater or lesser degree—in the general population. These variables, as is the case with traditional personality traits, will have different advantages and disadvantages.

The Concept of Dark Personality

In 2002, a study was published that identified, in the general population, three subclinical traits of a "socially malevolent nature, with behavior tendencies toward self-promotion, emotional coldness, duplicity, and aggressiveness" (Paulhus & Williams, 2002, p. 557): Machiavellianism, Narcissism, and Psychopathy. Although these traits had already been studied in the literature, they had never been assessed together. The correlations between these three traits are high enough to affirm that they share a large number of characteristics, but low enough to warrant their differential measurement (Paulhus & Williams, 2002, p. 562). Thus was born what is known as the "dark triad of personality". Shortly afterwards, the possibility of adding new traits to the dark triad began to be considered, as was the case of Sadism (O'Meara et al., 2011), giving rise to the dark tetrad. Proposals continued to follow one after another over time, with traits such as Spitefulness, Greed, or Perfectionism (Marcus & Zeigler-Hill, 2015). The proliferation of new candidates for the dark personality led to a reflection on both the number of traits that make up this construct and the common/ nuclear aspects they share.

Regarding the latter issue, there have been several attempts to unify the shared characteristics of dark personality under a single core or general factor (Book et al., 2015; Moshagen et al., 2018). However, the Factor D model of Moshagen et al. (2018) is perhaps the most comprehensive proposal. These authors propose a general factor ("D") that encompasses nine dark traits: Psychopathy, Machiavellianism, Narcissism, Sadism, Spitefulness, Self-interest, Egoism, Psychological Entitlement, and Amorality, later adding three more: Greed, Cruel Amorality, and Frustrated Amorality (Moshagen et al., 2020). An interesting aspect of the D-factor model is that, in the factor structure of the battery, the dark core does not form a second-order factor but instead represents a general factor that loads directly on the items—a structure known as "bifactor". That is, in this model, each item represents, simultaneously, an aspect of the dark personality and an aspect of the specific trait to which it refers. This overall score absorbs all the variance associated with socially aversive traits, and it has good predictive ability for different selfish, criminal, and ethically reprehensible behaviors (Denissen et al., 2022; Hilbig et al., 2021; Moshagen et al., 2018), surpassing other general or antisocial personality constructs in predictive power (Hilbig et al., 2021) and temporal stability (Zettler et al., 2021). However, by extracting this content from the items, the specific traits are deprived of the socially aversive characteristics that identified them, making the theoretical interpretation of their scores very difficult. This problem is common when working with bifactor-type models (Reise, 2012). In fact, the authors themselves discourage the use of scores on specific traits, conceptualizing them as residual factors (Moshagen et al., 2020).

Dark Personality Nomological Network

Dark personality has been related to a multitude of variables. Starting with the sociodemographic ones, a multitude of research has shown that men tend to score higher than women on dark traits (Cale & Lilienfeld, 2002; Hartung et al., 2022). Age also shows relationships with dark traits; as individuals age they tend to score lower on dark traits (Hartung et al., 2022), although scores increase slightly during adolescence and are maintained during youth (Klimstra et al., 2020).

In relation to general personality, negative relationships have been observed with Agreeableness (Furnham et al., 2014; Hilbig et al., 2021) and with Honesty-Humility from the HEXACO model (Lee & Ashton, 2014). Narcissism correlates positively with Extraversion (Furnham et al., 2014). On the other hand, these traits show inverse relationships with the so-called "luminous triad", three traits (Humanism, Kantianism, and Faith in Humanity) that imply caring and charitable orientation towards others (Kaufman et al., 2019). Regarding intelligence, a meta-analysis demonstrated a null relationship with dark triad traits (O'Boyle et al., 2013), although later research indicates a positive relationship between IQ and Machiavellianism (Kowalski et al., 2018).

Although dark traits are considered subclinical, they place individuals at risk for various maladjustments, including psychopathological issues (Thomaes et al., 2017). They have been related to depressive symptoms (Jonason et al., 2015) and to certain personality disorders, such as antisocial, narcissistic, paranoid, or borderline (Hilbig et al., 2021). They have also been related to a higher problematic use of social networks (Kircaburun et al., 2019),

especially in the case of Narcissism, with Psychopathy being related to other types of addictions (e.g. internet, pathological gambling; Jauk & Dieterich, 2019). Furthermore, individuals with high scores on some dark traits seem to have a tendency to aggressiveness (Moshagen et al., 2018, 2020), with narcissistic profiles being prone to aggression when their pride is attacked, and psychopathic profiles responding to physical provocations (Jones & Neria, 2015; Jones & Paulhus, 2010). Dark traits have predictive capacity for bullying behaviors, both face-to-face and online, with Sadism being the most strongly associated trait and Narcissism having the weakest relationship (Buckels et al., 2014; Van Geel et al., 2017). In the realm of affective relationships, these personalities tend to have short-lived relationships with numerous partners (Jonason et al., 2009, 2010, 2012), which aligns with a "ludus" type of love characterized by lack of commitment and little emotional depth (Jonason & Kavanagh, 2010). Although the "fast life strategy" (Jonason et al., 2009, 2017; McDonald et al., 2012) associated with these traits could facilitate the quick gain of benefits, especially in the workplace, their exploitative and insensitive nature make individuals scoring high in these traits problematic for fostering healthy workplace climates and healthy relationships among colleagues (Mathieu, 2021; O'Boyle et al., 2012).

Dark traits predict career development at the same level or even above classic personality traits (Grijalva & Newman, 2015; Spurk et al., 2016, p. 119). Narcissism seems to be related to slightly higher salaries, Machiavellianism to a higher probability of obtaining a leadership position, and Psychopathy to lower satisfaction with the chosen career path (Spurk et al., 2016). Regarding leadership in companies, a meta-analysis has shown that individuals with marked psychopathic traits are more likely to reach leadership positions, although these types of leaders are less effective than the rest (Landay et al., 2019). It is worth noting that this effect seems to be true for men but not for women, who are penalized for openly displaying psychopathic tendencies in the workplace (Landay et al., 2019). Moreover, this type of leader is not desirable from the worker's point of view: employees who perceive psychopathic traits in their bosses tend to be less satisfied with their career and work environment (Volmer et al., 2016) and have a higher number of psychological problems, as well as work and family conflicts (Mathieu et al., 2014).

Psychometric Tools of Dark Personality

A table with the main tools for the evaluation of dark traits is provided below, indicating, where available, references to their Spanish validation (Table 1).

Among all the scales mentioned above, the most widely used in research has been the Dirty Dozen (DD; Jonason & Webster, 2010). Despite its great popularity, it has faced numerous criticisms, mainly referring to the low representativeness of the constructs assessed given its low number of items (12; Jones & Paulhus, 2014; Miller et al., 2019). This led to the development of a measurement instrument with a higher number of items per dimension (9), the Short Dark Triad or SD3, with 27 items (Jones & Paulhus, 2014). Recently, the three versions of the D-factor model (D70, D35, and D16; Moshagen et al., 2020), used with the five-item model of Bader et al. (2021), have gained increasing relevance in the field of dark personality.

Table 1
Main Scales for the Evaluation of Dark Traits

Name	Author	Trait	No. Items	Type	Spanish Validation
SRP-4	Paulhus et al. (2016)	Psychopathy	64/29	Likert 5 points	Martínez et al. (2021)
LSRP	Levenson et al. (1995)	Psychopathy	26	Likert 4 points	Andreu et al. (2018)
PPTS	Boduszek et al. (2022)	Psychopathy	28	Likert 5 points	-
PPI-R	Lilienfeld (2005)	Psychopathy	154	Likert 4 points	-
TriPM	Patrick (2010)	Psychopathy	58/15	Likert 4 points	Tomás-Portalés et al. (2021)
EPA	Lynam et al. (2011, 2013)	Psychopathy	178/72	Likert 5 points	-
NPI	Raskin & Hall (1979)	Narcissism	40	Forced Res.	García & Cortés (1998)
NARQ	Back et al. (2013)	Narcissism	18	Likert 6 points	Doroszuk et al. (2020)
CNI	Gebauer et al. (2012)	Narcissism	16	Likert 7 points	-
PES	Campbell et al. (2004)	Privilege	9	Likert 7 points	Mola et al. (2013)
MACH-IV	Christie & Geis (1970)	Machiavellianism	20	Likert 6 points	Belaus et al. (2022)
MPS	Dahling et al. (2009)	Machiavellianism	16	Likert 5 points	-
RWA	Altemeyer (1981)	Authoritarianism	22	Likert 9 points	Etchezahar (2012)
DGS (a)	Krekels & Pandelaere (2015)	Greed	6	Likert 7 points	-
DGS (b)	Seuntjens et al., 2015)	Greed	7	Likert 5 points	Estrada-Mejia et al. (2023)
GTM	Mussel et al. (2015)	Greed	7	Likert 7 points	-
GRE€€D	Mussel & Hewig (2016)	Greed	12	Likert 7 points	-
Egoism Sca.	Weigel et al. (1999)	Egoism	12	Likert 5 points	-
VAST	Paulhus & Jones (2015)	Sadism	16	Likert 5 points	-
SSIS	O'Meara et al. (2011)	Sadism	10	Likert 5 points	Pineda et al. (2023)
VAVS	Veselka et al. (2014)	"Sins"	108	Likert 5 points	-
DD	Jonason & Webster (2010)	Dark Triad	12	Likert 5 points	Pineda et al. (2020)
SD-3	Jones & Paulhus (2014)	Dark Triad	27	Likert 5 points	Pineda et al. (2020)
TOP	Schwarzinger & Schuler (2018)	Dark Triad	-	-	Arribas & Solar (2022)
SD-4	Paulhus et al. (2021)	Dark Tetrad	28	Likert 5 points	Ortet-Walker et al. (2024)
D70, D35, D16	Moshagen et al. (2020)	Factor D	70, 35, 16	Likert 5 points	García-Fernández et al. 2024)

While numerous scales exist for evaluating socially aversive traits, none provide a theoretical framework that encompasses all the traits defined in the literature while also offering mutually exclusive definitions that avoid theoretical overlap among components.

Criticism of Theoretical Overlap

Although the previous section lists interesting models for the assessment of socially aversive traits, all of them suffer from a common issue: the theoretical overlap of their traits. Overlap refers to redundancy in certain definitions of the proposed traits. This problem is observed relatively often in the field of dark personality, since it is common practice to use pre-existing questionnaires from the literature to simultaneously evaluate multiple dark traits, ignoring three issues: the internal structure of the scales, the definitions of the traits, and the wording of the items.

Neglect of Multidimensionality

Beginning with the first aspect, none of the traits that make up the dark triad were considered essentially unidimensional prior to 2002 (Jonason & Luévano, 2013, p. 539; Miller et al., 2019). Traditionally, psychopathy has been conceptualized into four first-order factors regrouped into two second-order factors (Hare, 1980; Levenson et al., 1995). Other more current models have conceptualized it in eight first-order factors rearranged into two or three second-order factors (Lilienfeld & Andrews, 1996), or in three first-order factors in the case of the triarchic model (Patrick et al.,

2009). The unidimensional conceptualization of psychopathy seems to have emerged following the publication of the research by Paulhus and Williams (2002). The same is true with Narcissism: for the NPI—the most widely used questionnaire for its evaluation—proposals range from two to seven factors (Ackerman et al., 2011). Machiavellianism is the only trait conceived as unidimensional by the researchers who proposed it (Christie & Geis, 1970), although reference is made to three Machiavellian facets: worldviews, manipulative tactics, and moral beliefs (Christie & Geis, 1970, pp. 11-13).

Overlapping Definitions

This problem leads to a second issue: the partial overlap of definitions. Offering only a general score on multidimensional constructs hides the fact that some facets are repeated between questionnaires. Psychopathy, for example, is composed of the facets of manipulation, insensitivity, and disinhibition (Patrick et al., 2009). On the other hand, Machiavellianism can be understood as manipulation, insensitivity, and strategic-calculative orientation (Jones & Figueredo, 2013). As can be seen, two of its three facets overlap. Other examples can be found in the Factor D model, for example, in the similarity between the definitions of Narcissism, Self-interest, and Psychological Privilege (Moshagen et al., 2018).

Item Overlap

The overlap in definitions leads to an overlap in the items used in the questionnaires. If the reader consults Table 2, he/she will see

Table 2
Manipulation and Deceit Items

No.	Item
01	I find it easy to manipulate people.
02	I have a natural talent for influencing people.
03	I can make people believe whatever I want.
04	I find it easy to manipulate people.
05	People can usually tell if I'm lying.
06	I would like to scam someone.
07	It's fun to trick other people.
08	I think I could beat a lie detector.
09	Honesty is the best way to proceed.
10	The best way to handle people is to tell them what they want to hear.
11	There are no excuses for lying.

Note. Items 1-3 = NPI Scale (Raskin & Hall, 1979). Items 4-8 = SRP Scale (Hare, 1985). Items 9-11 = MACH-IV Scale (Christie & Geis, 1970).

that all the items seem to assess the same construct: Manipulation. The reality is that these items are taken from three different questionnaires: the first three belong to a Narcissism scale (NPI; Raskin & Hall, 1979), the next five to a Psychopathy scale (SRP; Hare, 1985), and the last three to a Machiavellianism scale (MACH-IV; Christie & Geis, 1970). An extreme example of this situation is the Egoism scale of Weigel et al., 1999, in which most of the items are a replica of the Machiavellianism items of the MACH-IV (Christie & Geis, 1970). However, these constructs—when assessed with these tests—have been treated as different in the scientific literature (Moshagen et al., 2018, 2020).

In summary, it could be said that, in the field of dark personality, it is common to encounter what are known as "jangle fallacies" (i.e., referring to the same construct by different names; Gonzalez et al., 2021; Kelley, 1927). However, in this case, it is not entire constructs that overlap but rather one or more of their facets.

Naturally, if traits with common facets are correlated, the correlational value will be high, given the redundancy of the assessed content. This has led many researchers to understand Subclinical Psychopathy and Machiavellianism as equivalent constructs (McHoskey et al., 1998; Miller et al., 2017). In Moshagen et al.'s (2018) research, Psychopathy correlates 0.73 with Egoism, 0.79 with Sadism, and 0.80 with Resentfulness and Machiavellianism, these values being higher than the reliability estimate of the Psychopathy scale itself (0.72; Moshagen et al., 2018, p. 665). In fact, the variables Egoism, Machiavellianism, Psychopathy, and Amorality intercorrelate between 0.68 and 0.80, it being highly debatable whether these constructs can truly be considered different.

All these problems are serious threats to the theoretical conceptualization of dark personality models. Thus, a proposal is needed that encompasses all the socially aversive characteristics described in the literature while avoiding overlap in their component definitions.

Proposal of a new Theoretical Model for Evaluating Dark Traits

First, a detailed review of the previous literature was conducted and numerous questionnaires on dark personality were reviewed, some of them cited in Table 1. The aim of this review was to identify the different facets present in the various dark traits in order to: 1) provide a general definition of dark personality; 2) develop a list and operational definitions of each component of the model.

General Definition

The definition of Paulhus and Williams (2002): "behavioral tendencies toward self-promotion, emotional coldness, duplicity, and aggressiveness", gives certain clues as to what is meant by socially aversive, listing different forms of interaction that can be considered as such. However, the description is not entirely precise and maintains a certain subjectivity when speaking of a "socially malevolent character". A more adequate definition could be the one proposed by Moshagen for factor D: "a general tendency to maximize individual utility—ignoring, accepting, or malevolently causing disadvantages in others—accompanied by beliefs that serve as justifications" (Moshagen et al., 2018, p. 657). However, two aspects should be removed from the latter: first, the adverb "malevolently", as malevolence is a philosophical concept that obscures the explanation of the behaviors that are intended to be studied. Secondly, the final clarification about "beliefs that serve as justifications". This addition is understood to be redundant, since beliefs, understood as covert verbal behaviors (Skinner, 1986, 2014), themselves satisfy the first part of the definition. Thus, beliefs are also behaviors serving individual benefit, with the difference that such benefit cannot always be observed by society (e.g. the benefit of a manipulative behavior is observable by others, while the wellbeing generated by a privilege belief is not).

However, the general definition of a dark trait is: "A tendency to achieve individual benefit by ignoring, accepting, or deliberately causing disadvantages to others". This definition delimits a functional class of behaviors with different topographies, but identical purpose. For example, a sadistic behavior involves causing harm to others, while a greedy one is defined as an insatiable craving for possession. Despite their different manifestations, both serve the same function: to achieve individual benefit by generating or ignoring disadvantages to others. Thus, any dark trait will align with the general definition provided above while specifying a specific manifestation or topography of it.

Definition of Traits

The following is a list of the dark traits initially selected as the object of study, accompanied by a justification for their inclusion. Special care has been taken to generate definitions that are as "unidimensional" as possible. In addition, care has been taken to avoid overlapping definitions. Note that, by overlapping, we refer to redundancy in definitions or items, but this does not prevent two traits from being highly related.

Authoritarianism. Defined as: "Seeking pleasure in establishing dominance relationships." Authoritarianism is a pathological personality trait that began to be studied after World War II as an explanatory factor for the rise of fascist regimes. Its etiology has been located in a deep feeling of insecurity (Fromm, 1941/1994) or in an overly strict parenting style that fosters authoritarianism as a defense mechanism (Adorno et al., 1950/2019). One of the first scales for its evaluation was the California F-scale (Titus & Hollander, 1957), later improved by Bob Altemeyer, giving rise to the Right-Wing Authoritarianism Scale (RWS; Altemeyer, 1981). This trait has been developed primarily in the field of politics and sociology (Duckitt et al., 2010; Feldman & Stenner, 1997). Although the concept seems similar to what is known as "Social Dominance"

(Pratto et al., 1994; Whitley, 1999), the latter speaks of a privileged position of a social group over other(s) and not of an individual over others. Authoritarianism usually includes beliefs related to political conservatism, submission to authority, or the use of aggressive techniques to maintain social hierarchy (Duckitt et al., 2010); however, in this study the definition is limited to the pleasure obtained by being in positions of power, to avoid theoretical overlap with other traits such as cruelty, revenge, or manipulation. This definition is very close to what is assessed by the items of the Dominance subscale of the Elemental Psychopathy Assessment (EPA; Lynam et al., 2011), the Leadership-Authority dimension of the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Ackerman et al., 2011), or the Desire for Control subdimension of the Machiavellian Personality Scale (MPS; Dahling et al., 2009).

Greed. Defined as: "Insatiable desire to possess more than others". This concept had already been defined in Greek philosophy as pleonexia and is considered one of the seven deadly sins of the Catholic Church, the Bible going so far as to state that "the love of money is the root of all evil" (Santa Biblia Reina Valera, 1960, Timoteo. 6:10 [Reina Valera Holy Bible, 1960, Timothy. 6:10]). Given these precedents, it is strange that this trait has not been much studied in the field of dark personality, as noted by Marcus & Zeigler-Hill (2015). There are different scales for its assessment, two of them developed in parallel and independently by different authors (which is why they bear the same name): Dispositional Greed Scale (DGS; Krekels & Pandelaere, 2015; Seuntjens et al., 2015). Other scales assessing greed are the Greed Trait Measure (GTM; Mussel et al., 2015), the GR€€D (Mussel & Hewig, 2016), the Greed subscale of the Virtues and Vices Scale (VAVS; Veselka et al., 2014), or the Greed Avoidance subscale of the Honesty-Humility dimension of the HEXACO (Lee & Ashton, 2012). All of them show good evidence of convergent validity with each other (Mussel et al., 2018; Zeelenberg et al., 2022), and their definition of greed is homologous to the one presented here.

Cruelty. Defined as: "Seeking pleasure in the suffering of others". Although in literature it is usually identified as sadism (in reference to the paraphilias narrated in the novels of the Marquis de Sade; Sade, 1787/1994, 2012), in this thesis the term cruelty will be preferred to dissociate the trait from its sexual-paraphilic connotation (i.e., Sexual Sadism Disorder [F65.52]; American Psychiatric Association, 2013). As already discussed in the section on the dark triad-tetrad, this trait has already been added to the dark personality construct (Buckels et al., 2013; Paulhus et al., 2021). In some conceptualizations, Sadism is subdivided into vicarious sadism (observing a sadistic situation) and direct sadism (actively engaging in sadistic behavior), as is the case with the Varieties of Sadistic Tendencies scale (VAST; Paulhus & Jones, 2015). The definition provided includes both behaviors. It should be noted that, although other definitions include an instrumental component to sadism apart from pleasure (e.g., "...for the purpose of inflicting power and dominance or for enjoyment and pleasure" (O'Meara et al., 2011, p. 523), in this definition the instrumental part has been eliminated to avoid overlap with the Authoritarianism trait.

Insensitivity. Defined as "Disregard for the suffering of others". Insensitivity is a core trait of the dark personality, in fact, it has been proposed as a central component of the construct alongside Manipulation (Jones & Figueredo, 2013). Insensitivity is part of the emotional component of Psychopathy, reflected in items of the

Emotional dimension of the Self Report Psychopathy (SRP; Hare, 1980), which is included in Factor I of Psychopathy of the Levenson Self Report Psychopathy (LSRP; Levenson et al., 1995). The Psychopathic Personality Traits Scale distinguishes between Affective and Cognitive Insensitivity depending on whether the items refer to experiencing others' emotions or understanding them rationally (PPTS; Boduszek et al., 2016). It should be noted that the definition provided refers to the former. In fact, this differentiation is what allows us to distinguish the lack of empathy characteristic of Autism Spectrum Disorders (problem in Theory of Mind - cognitive empathy) from the lack of affective Empathy characteristic of psychopaths (Baron-Cohen, 2013; Maguire et al., 2024).

Irresponsibility. Defined as: "Failure to adhere to rules and commitments that harms others." Irresponsibility is a fundamental component of psychopathic personalities: it is seen in the Lifestyle subscale of the SRP (Hare, 1980), in Psychopathy Factor II of the LSRP (Levenson et al., 1995), in the Lack of Concern and Recklessness dimensions of the PPI-R (Lilienfeld & Andrews, 1996), in the Disinhibition component of the triPM (Patrick et al., 2009), and in some components of the EPA such as Thrill-Seeking, Deception, Opposition, Sensation-Seeking, etc. (Lynam et al., 2011).

Manipulation. Defined as: "Use of covert/subtle strategies with others to achieve individual interests". Manipulation is the most characteristic component of Machiavellianism (Christie & Geis, 1970; McHoskey et al., 1998). Together with Insensitivity, it makes up Psychopathy Factor I (i.e., interpersonal component) of Hare's theory (Levenson et al., 1995), which was proposed as a possible core of the dark personality (Jones & Figueredo, 2013). Manipulation is also a fundamental part of the Psychopathic Personality Traits Scale (PPTS, Boduszek et al., 2016). Manipulative techniques are also part of Narcissism, see the Privilege-Exploitation dimension of the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Ackerman et al., 2011). All these dimensions conceptualize the definition as the instrumental use of others to achieve individual goals, through techniques such as flattery, extortion, or deceit.

Pride. Defined as: "Dismissal of other people's qualities with conceit of personal qualities". It is the fundamental core of Narcissism. Its two facets (dismissal + conceit) are evident in the two dimensions of the Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Questionnaire (NARQ; Back et al., 2013). Very similar conceptualizations are given when speaking of "Psychological Entitlement:" "A stable and maintained feeling that one deserves and is entitled to more than others" (Campbell et al., 2004, p. 31). It is also a trait related to psychopathy, as reflected in the Self-Confidence, Egocentrism, and Arrogance subscales of the EPA (Lynam et al., 2011). It is also further evident in the Exhibitionism items of the NPI (Ackerman et al., 2011). The Honesty-Humility dimension of the HEXACO includes Modesty items, defined as the tendency "not to have a strong feeling of superiority or privilege" (Lee & Ashton, 2012, p. 49).

Revenge. Defined as: "Response to personal harm that seeks to inflict harm on the offender". Aggression-hostility is a psychopathic trait; a subscale of the EPA has the same name (Lynam et al., 2011). On the other hand, narcissistic personalities tend to respond aggressively when confronted (e.g. Rivalry-Aggressiveness Dimension of the NARQ; Back et al., 2013). Marcus et al. define Spitefulness as a specific type of revenge: "a preference for harming

another that also involves harm to oneself. This harm could be social, financial, physical, or an inconvenience" (Marcus et al., 2014, p. 566), arguing that this trait should be included in dark personality frameworks (Marcus & Zeigler-Hill, 2015).

Conclusions

The psychological literature on socially aversive traits has several tools for assessment in the general population. However, most lack substantive prior analysis of the variables being measured. The Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing (AERA et al., 2014) reaffirm the importance of content validity (i.e., the ability of the items to represent the construct) when interpreting the scores of a questionnaire. Indeed, establishing a general framework and operational definitions of measured variables are the initial steps in the construction of a test (Muñiz & Fonseca-Pedrero, 2019).

The present study presents a conceptual framework for a new socially aversive trait assessment battery, the Dark Trait Assessment Battery (García-Fernández, Postigo, González-Nuevo, et al., 2025). Its emphasis on the molecular assessment of dark personality may be of great interest both for psychological research and for applied practice, in contexts such as personnel selection, expert assessment, or even clinical practice.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest in relation to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

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