



Big 5 and Dark Triad Personality Traits are Related to Mate Guarding Behaviors in Men

Sierra Nastasi Supervised By Dr. Alita Cousins

Department of Psychological Sciences

INTRODUCTION

Mate Retention

- Defined as tactics to reduce partner infidelity and maintain relationships (Barbaro et al., 2018).
- Consists of both positive tactics (e.g., affection towards one's partner) and negative tactics (e.g., checking up on a partner) (Barbaro et al., 2018).

Mate Guarding

- a mate retention tactic with the primary goal of preventing a partner from cheating (Cousins et al., 2015).

Resistance to Mate Guarding

- Behavior expressed to resist a partner's mate guarding tactics (Cousins et al., 2015).

Big 5

- Consists of: extraversion (high social skills), agreeableness (ability to be cooperative), conscientiousness (pursuit of long-term goals), neuroticism (sensitivity to social-based threats), and openness (seeking novelty) (Atari et al., 2017).
- Greater conscientiousness and openness are linked with lower with cost-inflicting mate retention tactics. Cost-inflicting tactics overlap with mate guarding (Atari et al., 2017).

Dark Triad

- Consists of: Narcissism (exploitation for personal gain, entitlement), psychopathy (impulsive behaviors, lack of remorse), and Machiavellianism (manipulation, cold emotionality) (Bertl et al., 2017).
- Dark Triad traits associated with most mate retention tactics, including aggression towards a partner or others, which is one aspect of mate guarding (Jonason et al., 2010).
- Machiavellianism best predicts mate retention behaviors, primarily cost-inflicting mate retention behaviors (Chegeni et al., 2018).
- All Dark Triad Traits were related to jealousy aimed at preventing cheating (Barelds et al., 2017). This finding coincides with mate guarding, and the primary goal of preventing a partner from cheating (Cousins et al., 2015). The similarities indicate a connection between mate guarding and the dark triad traits, likely through the use of manipulation to cheat and avoid cheating.

HYPOTHESES

1. The Big 5 personality traits will not be strongly related to mate guarding behaviors.
2. The Dark Triad traits will be significantly, positively correlated with mate guarding and resistance to mate guarding.

METHOD

Participants had a mean age of 31.34 ($SD = 11.25$, $N = 687$). Recruited from Mturk.

Race/Ethnicity

- 59.80% White
- 5.90% Black/ African American
- 7.70% Hispanic/ Latino
- 6.80% Asian
- .70% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- 2.8% other

Marital Status

- 18.30% Single
- 1.40% Dating Multiple People
- 42.4% Dating One Person Exclusively
- 2.00% Engaged
- 20.1% Married

MEASURES

Big Five Inventory (BFI) (John et al., 1991).

- Used to measure levels of Big 5 personality traits on a 5-point Likert scale

Dirty Dozen (Jonason & Webster, 2010).

- Used to measure levels of Dark Triad personality traits

Resistance to Mate Guarding (Cousins et al., 2015).

- Used to assess resistance to a partner's mate guarding attempts on a 5-point Likert scale

Self Mate Guarding

- Used to assess the frequency of self mate guarding tactics on a 5-point Likert scale - A higher score indicates more self mate guarding

RESULTS

Due to the large sample size, all results were statistically significant. Effect sizes are reported to showcase which effects were **negligible**/small and which were **medium**.

Self-reported mate guarding had only small relationships with BFI traits:

- Higher in Extraversion ($r(677) = .11$, $p = .004$) for a **small effect size**
- Higher in Neuroticism ($r(675) = .14$, $p < .001$) for a **small effect size**
- Lower in Openness ($r(676) = -.19$, $p < .001$) for a **small effect size**
- Lower in Conscientiousness ($r(677) = -.21$, $p < .001$) for a **small effect size**
- Lower in Agreeableness ($r(676) = -.15$, $p < .001$) for a **small effect size**

Self-reported resistance to mate guarding had only small relationships with BFI traits:

- Higher in Extraversion ($r(677) = .09$, $p = .021$) for **no effect**
- Higher in Neuroticism ($r(675) = .13$, $p = .001$) for a **small effect size**
- Lower in Openness ($r(676) = -.17$, $p < .001$) for a **small effect size**
- Lower in Conscientiousness ($r(677) = -.24$, $p < .001$) for a **small effect size**
- Lower in Agreeableness ($r(676) = -.20$, $p < .001$) for a **small effect size**

Self-reported mate guarding had medium-sized relationships with Dark Triad traits:

- Narcissism ($r(728) = .40$, $p < .001$) for a **medium effect size**
- Psychopathy ($r(727) = .40$, $p < .001$) for a **medium effect size**
- Machiavellianism ($r(727) = .39$, $p < .001$) for a **medium effect size**

Self-reported resistance to mate guarding had medium-sized relationships with Dark Triad traits:

- Narcissism ($r(728) = .35$, $p < .001$) for a **medium effect size**
- Psychopathy ($r(727) = .49$, $p < .001$) for a **medium effect size**
- Machiavellianism ($r(727) = .48$, $p < .001$) for a **medium effect size**

DISCUSSION

- Due to the large sample size, interpretation should focus on effect size.
- Not surprisingly, Big Five personality traits were only weakly linked with mate guarding and resistance to mate guarding.
- Dark Triad traits were linked with mate guarding and resistance to mate guarding, with medium effect sizes, indicating the larger degree of overlap between these personality traits and mate guarding.
- For individuals higher in Dark Triad traits, the entitlement, manipulation, and lack of remorse might lead to of coercive control to keep their mate in the relationship. These individuals may prefer to use manipulative and aggressive tactics to prevent a partner from cheating.
- In addition, previous research suggests that those high on Dark Triad Traits may be more likely to respond positively to those trying to poach them from a relationship (Jonason et al., 2010). This may be why those higher in Dark Triad traits are more likely to resist the mate guarding of their partner—they are interested in another mate.
- Although Dark Triad traits are considered by many to be negative traits, they may serve a function for individuals possessing them. These personality traits may facilitate a dual strategy of seeking short-term partners, while trying to manipulate a current mate to stay or not cheat.
- Cheating while in a long term relationship has been linked with resistance to mate guarding (Cousins et al., 2008) possibly because such a strategy requires getting away from a partner.
- Since those possessing Dark Triad traits may make difficult partners, they may end up pushing away a current mate, who may seek out another partner.

LIMITATIONS and CONCLUSIONS

- These are self-report data on behaviors that are infrequent in many relationships. Some people may be unaware of their use of these tactics.
- Further research should track relationships over time to see if the use of these tactics is related to relationship dissolution, especially when people score high on Dark Triad Traits.
- Dark Triad personality traits may facilitate a dual strategy of keeping a long term mate (hence increased mate guarding) and seeking other mates (hence increased resistance to mate guarding).