

# Relationship between Dark Personality Traits and Spiritual Well-Being among Consecrated Men and Women in Western Deanery, Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2024.8110146>

Received: 22 October 2024; Accepted: 28 October 2024; Published: 11 December 2024

## ABSTRACT

Personality and spiritual well-being play influential roles on the holistic growth of Catholic consecrated men and women. This quantitative study investigated the relationship between dark personality traits and spiritual well-being among consecrated men and women in the Western Deanery, Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi Kenya. Dark Triad Theory was employed. A correlation research design was applied and Short Dark Triad (SD3) brief measure instrument was used to measure the dark personality traits whereas Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS) was used to measure the spiritual well-being dimensions of participants. Krejcie and Morgan formula was used to obtain a sample of 255 from a target population of 810. SPSS version 21 was used and data was analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) and inferential statistics (Pearson product moment). Findings of the current study established that 42% ( $n = 107$ ,  $M = 31.52$ ,  $Std. = 4.91$ ) of the consecrated men and women were at Machiavellian personality trait, while 25% ( $n = 65$ ,  $M = 27.58$ ,  $std = 5.58$ ) came under psychopath personality trait. A majority of participants ( $n = 130$ , 51.1%) scored a high level of spiritual well-being, while 11% ( $n = 28$ ) scored low level of spiritual well-being. The Pearson correlation analysis found a positive relationship ( $r = .264$ ,  $p = .000 \leq 0.05$ ) between dark personality traits and spiritual well-being among consecrated men and women in Western Deanery, Archdiocese of Nairobi. Psycho-Spiritual based programs could be integrated in the formation curriculum of seminarians and religious to the spiritual well-being and psycho-educate on the impact of harmful personality traits on human relationships among consecrated men and women.

**Keywords:** Spiritual Well-being, Dark Personality Traits, Consecrated men and women, Western Deanery Archdiocese of Nairobi

## INTRODUCTION

Personality traits are relatively stable patterns of behavior, feelings and thoughts (Allem & Fluckiger, 2022). Much of literature on personality tend to focus on the light side of personality traits as captured by the Big Five Model namely; extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness (Fetradjiev & Van de Vijver, 2015). The models of personality that does not capture positive aspects of personality have not been well investigated (Ashton et al., 2019). According to Mededovic and Pedrovic (2015), little literature has captured the undesirable personality dispositions that are counterproductive, sub-clinical and dysfunctional.

The current study investigated the relationship between dark personality traits classified under three constructs namely; Machiavellian, Narcissist, and Psychopathy and spiritual well-being among consecrated men and women in Western Deanery Archdiocese of Nairobi Kenya. Machiavellian personality is characterized by manipulative, self-interest, insensitivity and cruel affects within interpersonal relationships (Deshong et al., 2015). Narcissistic personality tends towards attention seeking, strive for power, superiority, dominance, and grandiosity (Grijalva & Newman, 2015). On the other hand, psychopathy consists of irrationality, impulsive, sensation seeking, erratic and antisocial levels of affect (Boddy, 2014). Spiritual well-being is a quality of relationship which a person has with the self, other humanity, nature, and God (Fisher 2011). It is a perceived quality of life in a religious and existential sense motivated by achieving a state of being spiritual (Paloutzian et al., 2021). The World Health Organization (WHO, 2002) defines Spiritual well-being in six dimensions

namely; meaning and purpose in life, spiritual connection, experiences of awe and wonder, spiritual strength, wholeness and integration, hope and optimism, faith and inner peace.

A global study on personality revealed that 50% of human population consists of Light Traits, 43% consists of a mixture of light and dark personality whereas 7% consists of pure dark personality traits (Kaufman et al., 2019). A study in the United States of America (USA) on a sample of 998 participants showed that there was a high prevalence of Machiavellian personality at 39% as compared to Narcissist 34.5% and Psychopathy 26.5% (Jones & Paulhus, 2013). Another study in Europe showed Machiavellian personality traits with high prevalence at 39%, Narcissist 35.6% and Psychopathy 25.4% (Persson et al., 2019). These studies are indicators of the presence of dark personality traits among humanity.

Another study in the United States on a sample of 282 participants revealed a positive association between the dark traits of personality as a predictor of counterproductive work behaviors (Miller, 2017). Apparently, a study in US found that dark personality traits operate as hidden part of personality discarded in the unconscious recesses of the mind (Fortune, 2021). The findings go in line with another study in England by Elliot (2020) which established that each person has a dual nature composed of the conscious light part of personality and the dark side of personality which is unconscious. The study further shows that the dark side of personality forms the dim cavern of the unconscious in everybody containing forbidden feelings, secret wishes, creative urges, and dark forces.

Consequently, another study in the USA on establishing the influence of the dark personality traits on human relationships found out that the dark personality arises as a result of repressed emotions that destroy personal well-being in relationships (Kirby, 2022). These findings reveal that dark personality traits form darker aspects that have the potential to secretly control human behaviors. Therefore, there is a need of bringing to the conscious the unconscious elements of human conscience as in the current study. A study in the United Kingdom (UK) found that dark personality is the unconscious aspect rooted in an individuals' personality which the conscious ego does not identify with (Stevens, 2021).

Nonetheless, studies in Italy and Australia have showed the circumstances under which the dark personality traits can be beneficial (Jonason & Middleton, 2015). Though qualities of Machiavellian, narcissist and psychopathy are socially unwanted, they are considered non-pathological and sub-clinical since individuals with these qualities can still live and function in the society without portraying significant problems. These traits serve important adaptive functions like facilitating behavior associated with goal attainment, particularly when the goals involve exploitative social strategies (Jonason & Wedster, 2012). A research carried out among employed University students on dark personality traits showed that narcissist traits moderated relationship between interpersonal conflict and counterproductive work behaviour (Meurs et al., 2013). Consecrated men and women in line with the above findings need to be acquainted with their dark personality traits to live an authentic religious life.

On the other hand, spiritual wellbeing is considered as one of the possible resources for managing crisis and trauma in mental health (Weber & Pargament, 2014). Spiritual well-being has been positively related to various indicators of mental health in personality dimensions and subjective well-being (Unterrainer et al., 2014). Studies in USA have constantly highlighted the relationship of spiritual parameters with the indicators of mental health and favorable personality facets (Koenig et al., 2012). According to Cook (2020), religion and spirituality as a subject of research in psychology and medicine, have received increasing interest in recent decades. Statistics of a proportion of global population show that around 4 in 5 people identifies themselves with spiritual well-being. The results show that spiritual well-being remains high and is expected to increase in coming decade to a projection of 87.5% by 2026 (Pew Research-Centre, 2017). Research in the USA show that the proportion of those who describe themselves as spiritual or religious is approximately 82% (Lipka & Gecewicz, 2017).

A study in German warned that humanity still experiences spiritual emptiness and dryness. It states, "The fullness of God, that is the paradox, includes emptiness and its experience. Just as God becomes a person, the Great Small, so too is fullness in emptiness and emptiness in fullness" (Wilmer, 2018, p. 175). A study in Central Europe on spiritual well-being among 620 Catholic Priests and Sisters showed that 15% were faced

with periods of spiritual dryness, 30% had less effective strategies for coping whereas 19% reported high spiritual well-being (Bussing et al., 2020). Another study in Germany indicated that spiritual well-being played a vital role among clergy engaged in pastoral ministry, granting fulfilment in life, and contributed to both somatic and mental wellness (Jacobs et al., 2016). Nonetheless, other researches show that weakness in faith or personal failure is not necessarily a result of spiritual dryness but dynamism of spiritual and psychological progress (Bussing et al., 2020).

Different researches show that spiritual well-being plays an important role in providing a protective function against addictive or suicidal behaviors as well as playing role in the process of recovering from mental illness (Unterrainer et al., 2014). In Sweden, a study in the field of mental health showed that spiritual well-being has gained particular attention in recent decades. A statistical study through cluster analysis and one way analysis (ANOVA) was conducted to identify possible types of spiritual well-being by examining the Big Five personality factors and central aspects of religiosity. The findings suggested that different types of spiritual well-being are associated with mental health and personality dimensions (Podolin-Danner, 2022). Contrary to the expectations, other studies show that lack of Spiritual Well-being can enable one to grow to maturity in faith as they deepen the understanding and knowledge of the presence of God (Nauer, 2017). This implies that not all spiritual challenges are signs of dysfunction between the mind and body (Exline et al., 2013).

In Asia, findings in Iran on a 362 participants showed that 57% indicated deep longing for God often regularly with 27% showing moderate longing whereas 17% seldom showed any interest for God. Consequently, 28% of the participants thought that their prayers went unanswered, 16% reported that god was distant whereas 24% felt that they were abandoned by God (Bussing & Dienberg, 2019). Others findings showed that 28% of Iranians were spiritually empty whereas 22% lost hope in life, 42% had ways to cope regularly, 30% occasionally had ways to cope whereas 28% seldom or never coped in life. Consequently, 47% stated that spiritual well-being was a regular inspiration in helping others basis whereas 37% experienced immense spiritual depth and serenity.

In Africa, a study in Nigeria by Magesa (2013), showed the need of future priests and religious to learn the importance of being flexible in their personality as proactive leaders of Christian communities. A study in South Africa and Uganda aimed at finding out the association of spirituality and well-being (Domain, 2019). The study compared data from two sub-Saharan African nations showing that there were both similarities and differences among racial groups in regard to spirituality and well-being. Another study in conducted sub-Saharan Africa using a mixed method study design aimed at determining the levels of spiritual well-being in relation to feeling at peace (Selman et al., 2011). The findings on a sample of 285 participants showed that more than 25% did not feel peace in relation to their spiritual well-being.

In Kenya, a study applying survey methodology research design and descriptive statistics data analysis, found out that religious non-believers report higher levels of psychopathic personality traits like self-centred impulsivity and cold hearted than religious believers (Dutto, 2012). Another study applying a convergent parallel mixed method on a population of 180 priests in the archdiocese of Nairobi showed that strong spiritual well-being played an important role as a support system in preventing burnout among Catholic priests (Machogu et al., 2022). The findings showed that 40.5% of the Catholic priests perceived the Church did not play important role on supporting the spiritual well-being of the priests. According to the study, the Church was 7.8% very effective, 12% effective, 13% ineffective, and 26.7% fairly ineffective in supporting the spiritual well-being of the priests.

## METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative correlational research design. Two standardized instruments were employed to collect the quantitative data namely the Short Dark Triad SD3 to collect data on dark personality traits (Jones & Paulhus, 2014). The Spiritual well-being Scale was used to measures two subscales of Religious Well-being (RWB) and Existential Well-being (EWB) (Paloutzian et al., 2021). The target population of the consecrated men and women was divided into strata based on age, gender and years of perpetual profession from which a sample size was selected using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula. The study made use of the Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences (SPSS Version 21) in analysing the

quantitative data.

As indicated in table 1, descriptive statistics analysis was employed to analyse the frequencies and the means of the sample demographics and variables.

Descriptive statistics was used to analyse research objective one in examining the prevalence of dark personality traits. With regards to objective two, descriptive statistical score was used to measure the levels of spiritual well-being whereas Pearson product moment was employed to analyse research objective three in establishing the relationship between dark personality traits and spiritual well-being among Catholic Consecrated men and women in Western deanery Archdiocese of Nairobi Kenya. Tangaza University’s panel of defence and the supervisors approved the research proposal and authorization letter was given by the directorate of research, innovation and extension at Tangaza University. Clearance permit was granted from National Commission of Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) in the Ministry of Higher Education. A letter from Religious Superiors Conference of Kenya (RSCK) was granted authorising data collection from target group.

## RESULTS

The following section presented the findings of the current study.

### Demographic Characteristics

This section presents the demographic characteristics of the study, which are age, gender, level of perpetual profession and level of education respectively. The findings are given in Table 1.

Table 1 Demographic Characteristics of participants

| Age                                  | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| 30-40 years                          | 130       | 51.0%      |
| 41-50 years                          | 59        | 23.1%      |
| 51-60 years                          | 47        | 18.4%      |
| 61 and above                         | 19        | 7.5%       |
| Total                                | 255       | 100.0%     |
| <b>Gender</b>                        |           |            |
| Male                                 | 143       | 56.1%      |
| Female                               | 112       | 43.9%      |
| Total                                | 255       | 100.0%     |
| <b>Level of perpetual profession</b> |           |            |
| Below 10 years                       | 135       | 52.9%      |
| Above 10 years                       | 120       | 47.1%      |
| Total                                | 255       | 100.0%     |
| <b>Level of Education</b>            |           |            |
| VTC                                  | 90        | 35.3%      |
| BA                                   | 145       | 56.9%      |

|       |     |       |
|-------|-----|-------|
| MA    | 13  | 5.1%  |
| PHD   | 7   | 2.7%  |
| Total | 255 | 100.0 |

As seen in Table 1, results indicated that 51.0% (n = 130) of the participants were at the age range of 30-40 years, while 7.5% (n = 19) were at the age range of 61 and above. Most (56.1%, n = 143) of the participants of this study were male compared to female participants (43.9%, n = 112). The findings also revealed that 52.9% (n = 135) of the participants were below 10 years of perpetual profession. Regarding levels education, it was found that 56.6% (n = 145) had BA, while 2.7% (n = 7) of the participants had PhD.

### The prevalence of Dark Personality Traits

This study examined the prevalence of dark personality traits among consecrated men and women in Western deanery, Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya. Findings from the analysis of the scores are presented in table 2.

Table 2 Prevalence of Dark Personality Traits among consecrated men and women in Western Deanery

| Traits        | Frequency | Percentage | Mean | Std. |
|---------------|-----------|------------|------|------|
| Machiavellian | 107       | 42%        | 31.5 | 4.9  |
| Narcissism    | 83        | 33%        | 29.5 | 5.0  |
| Psychopath    | 65        | 25%        | 27.6 | 5.6  |
| Total         | 255       | 100.0%     |      |      |

According to table 2, there were 42% (n= 107, M = 31.5, Std. = 4.9) of the consecrated men and women had Machiavellian personality trait, while 33% (n=83, M=29.5, Std. = 5.0) were narcissists whereas 25% (n = 65, M = 27.5765, Std. = 5.6) were psychopaths.

### Levels of spiritual well-being (SWB)

This study determined the levels of spiritual well-being among consecrated men and women in Western, Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya. Descriptive statistical analysis was utilized, and data were computed and scored so as to determine the levels of spiritual well-being.

Table 3 Levels of spiritual well-being among consecrated men and women

| Levels of spiritual wellbeing | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Low                           | 28        | 11%        |
| Moderate                      | 97        | 37.9%      |
| High                          | 130       | 51.1%      |
| Total                         | 255       | 100        |

As seen in table 3, the outcome of the analysis revealed that a majority 51.1% (n = 130) scored a high level of spiritual well-being, 37.9% (n = 97.) were at moderate level, while 11% (n = 28) of the consecrated men and women in Western deanery, Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi Kenya, were at low level of spiritual well-being.

## Relationship between Dark Personality Traits and Spiritual Well-Being

This study established the relationship between dark personality traits and spiritual well-being among Consecrated men and women in Western deanery, Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya. The Pearson product moment correlation analysis was conducted. The findings are tabulated in table.

Table 4 Relationship between Dark Personality Traits and Spiritual Well-Being Among Consecrated Men and Women in Western Deanery Archdiocese of Nairobi Kenya

|  |                     | Dark Personality | Spiritual Well-Being |
|--|---------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| Dark Personality   | Pearson Correlation | 1                | .264**               |
|  | Sig. (2-tailed)     |                  | .000                 |
|  | N                   | 255              | 255                  |
| Spiritual Well-Being   | Pearson Correlation | .264**           | 1                    |
|  | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000             |                      |
|  | N                   | 255              | 255                  |
| **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). |                     |                  |                      |

According to table 4, findings from the Pearson correlation analysis indicated that there was a positive relationship ( $r = .264$ ,  $p = .000 \leq 0.05$ ) between dark personality traits and spiritual well-being among consecrated men and women in Western deanery, Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya.

## DISCUSSION

The present study established the prevalence of dark personality traits among consecrated men and women in Western Deanery, Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya. It was found that (42%  $n = 107$ ,  $M = 31.5176$ ,  $SD = 4.90688$ ) of the participants were at Machiavellian personality traits, 33%,  $n = 83$ ,  $M = 29.5412$ ,  $SD = 5.00288$ ), were at Narcissism personality traits, while (25%  $n = 65$ ,  $M = 27.5765$ ,  $SD = 5.57845$ ) had psychopathy personality traits. The current study demonstrated that the three dark personality traits; Machiavellianism, Narcissist, and Psychopaths were reflective among the consecrated men and women in Western deanery, Archdiocese of Nairobi Kenya. The findings indicate that majority of the consecrated men and women scored high in Machiavellian traits followed by narcissist then psychopaths. This agrees with the findings in the USA and Canada which showed a high prevalence of Machiavellian personality at 39% as compared to Narcissist 34.5% and Psychopathy 26.5% (Jones & Delroy, 2014). Consequently, the findings go in line with other findings in US that showed 39% of participants with high prevalence of Machiavellian personality as compared 35.6% of Narcissist, and 25.4% Psychopathy (Persson et al., 2019).

The determination of the levels of spiritual well-being among consecrated men and women in Western deanery, Archdiocese of Nairobi Kenya found that ( $n = 130$ , 51.1%) of the participants scored high on spiritual well-being, ( $n = 97$ , 37.9%) came under moderate prevalence of spiritual wellbeing, while a small number of participants ( $n = 28$ , 11%) were at low prevalence of spiritual wellbeing. These findings in summation indicate that a good number (51.1%,  $n = 130$ ) of consecrated men and women have good relationship with God and have meaning and purpose in life. Spiritual wellbeing is one of the pillars of formation among consecrated men and women that help them to build their relationship with God, others and themselves. This confirms the study by Glodek & Novelty (2017) which showed that consecrated men and women are molded on spiritual formation and therefore expected to be healthy in matters spiritual well-being. Nonetheless, the findings of this study tend to be in contrary to the findings of a research carried out in the United States which showed that consecrated men and women experience full range of religious doubts and Spiritual dryness (Baumann et al.,

2019). Similarly, the findings do not agree with the findings of Chopra et al., (2011) who stated that majority of consecrated men and women end up living in the shadows of fear, anger, anxiety and violence that hampers their spiritual well-being. The findings of this study show that majority of consecrated men and women in Western Deanery, Archdiocese of Nairobi Kenya find purpose and meaning in life. The findings of the study agrees with the findings in Italy which showed a positive association between intrinsic religiosity and spiritual well-being among 156 Catholic priests and religious sisters (Oakley, 2017).

This study further examined the relationship between dark personality traits and spiritual wellbeing among consecrated men and women in Western deanery, Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya. There was a positive relationship ( $r = .264$ ,  $p = .000 \leq 0.05$ ) between dark personality traits and spiritual wellbeing among consecrated men and women in Western Deanery, Archdiocese of Nairobi. This implies that consecrated men and women with dark personality traits still experienced high spiritual wellbeing. On the contrary, the findings in the current study disagrees with the findings in the USA by Kaufman (2019) through a regression analysis which showed that there was a negative relationship between spiritual well-being and dark triad ( $\beta = -0.27$ ,  $p \leq 0.01$ ).

The positive relationship between the dark personality traits and spiritual well-being implies that while there may be a propensity for consecrated men and women with higher dark triad traits, there was still high spiritual well-being. This implies that the dark personality traits may coexist with consecrated men and women but their impact on spiritual well-being may not be substantial or consistent. The findings agree with a study in the USA on a sample of 309 consecrated men and women which confirmed that dark triad had a positive relationship with spiritual well-being on religious affiliation (Haddad et al., 2016). The findings in Germany showed that consecrated men and women who have dark traits tend to turn to God to avoid punishment from God thus they do not doubt the power of God and they think that He is kind (Excline et al., 2015). The unexpected positive relationship between the dark triad and spiritual well-being indicate that consecrated people believe in a just world where people get what they deserve (Schofield, et al., 2021).

## CONCLUSION

The current study had a 98.1% response rate. It established that consecrated men were the highest participants in this study, at 56.1% ( $n = 143$ ) followed by the female participants, at 43.9% ( $n = 112$ ). Also, 51.0% ( $n = 130$ ) of the participants were between the ages 30-40 years old, while a few number of the participants were 61 and above, being at 7.5% ( $n = 19$ ). Regarding level of education, it was found that those who had BA were the highest participants, being at 56.9% ( $n = 145$ ), while the lowest was those with PHD, being at 2.7% ( $n = 7$ ). In addition, the highest number of participants were below ten years of perpetual profession (52.9%,  $n = 135$ ), as compared to those above ten years of perpetual profession, at 47.1% ( $n = 120$ ) respectively. This study clearly indicated that 42% ( $n = 107$ ,  $M = 31.5176$ ,  $Std. = 4.90688$ ) of the participants had Machiavellian personality traits, narcissists were 33% ( $n = 83$ ,  $M = 29.5412$ ,  $Std. = 5.00288$ ) whereas psychopaths traits were at 25% ( $n = 65$ ,  $M = 27.5765$ ,  $Std. = 5.57845$ ). this was an indication that dark personality traits were prevalent among consecrated men and women in Western Deanery, Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya.

The current study also demonstrated that 51.1% ( $n = 130$ ) score high on the spiritual wellbeing, 37.9% ( $n = 97$ ) scored moderate while 11% ( $n = 28$ ) scored low spiritual wellbeing among consecrated men and women in Western Deanery, Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya. Finally, this study showed that there was a positive relationship ( $r = .264$ ,  $p = .000 \leq 0.05$ ) between dark personality traits and spiritual wellbeing among consecrated men and women in Western Deanery, Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya. Despite the malevolent nature of dark personality traits on human relationships, this study found out that the consecrated men and women in Western Deanery still experienced high spiritual well-being.

## RECOMMENDATION

This study suggested a corresponding study may be conducted in a different diocese in Kenya, investigating the relationship between dark personality traits and spiritual well-being among consecrated men and women. The new study may take on the same methodology as well as instruments as the present study. A comparative study may be carried out on the relationship between dark personality traits and human relationships among

consecrated men and women in the Archdiocese of Nairobi. Consequently, a mixed method study applying both quantitative and qualitative methods may be conducted exploring the quadrat dark personality traits among consecrated men and women in any diocese in Kenya. There is need for a future study to investigate the impact of dark personality traits on human relationship among consecrated men and women.

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