

Assessment of the Light and Dark Personality Traits of Sports Managers

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**Abstract**

This study aims to determine the levels of Light Triad and Dark Triad personality traits among sports managers, to examine differences across demographic variables, and to investigate the relationships between these traits. Conducted within a relational survey design, the research sample consisted of 242 sports managers employed in the Provincial Directorates of Youth and Sports. Data were collected using the Personal Information Form and the Dark Triad and Light Triad scales. Analyses were conducted using the SPSS software package, including independent samples t-tests, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), and Pearson correlation tests. The findings revealed significant differences in the narcissism dimension of the Dark Triad according to gender; in the psychopathy and Machiavellianism dimensions according to age; and in the Machiavellianism dimension according to years of service. Regarding the Light Triad, significant differences were observed in the faith in humanity dimension according to educational status and marital status. Although women scored higher on average in the humanism and Kantianism dimensions of the Light Triad, these differences were not statistically significant. Results of the correlation analysis indicated significant positive relationships between the subdimensions of the Dark Triad and those of the Light Triad.

**Keywords:** Dark Triad, Light Triad, Personality, Sports Manager.

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**Spor Yöneticilerinin Aydınlik ve Karanlık Kişilik Özelliklerinin Değerlendirilmesi**

**Öz**

Bu çalışmanın amacı, spor yöneticilerinin aydınlık ve karanlık üçlü kişilik özellikleri düzeylerinin belirlenerek demografik değişkenlere göre farklılıkların ve aralarındaki ilişkinin incelenmesidir. İlişkisel tarama modeli kapsamında yapılan çalışmada, araştırma grubunu Gençlik ve Spor İl Müdürlüklerinde görev yapan 242 spor yöneticisi oluşturmaktadır. Veriler, Kişisel Bilgi Formu ile Karanlık Üçlü ve Aydınlik Üçlü ölçekleri aracılığıyla toplanmış; SPSS paket programı kullanılarak analizlerde bağımsız örneklem t-testi, tek yönlü varyans analizi (ANOVA) ve Pearson korelasyon testi kullanılmıştır. Elde edilen bulgulara göre karanlık üçlü ölçeğinin cinsiyet değişkenine göre narsisizm boyutunda, yaş değişkenine göre psikopati ve makyavelizm boyutunda, hizmet yılı değişkenine göre ise makyavelizm boyutunda anlamlı farklılıklar tespit edilmiştir. Aydınlik üçlü ölçeği açısından eğitim ve medeni durum değişkenine göre insanlığa inanç boyutlarında anlamlı farklılıklar görülmüştür. Aydınlik üçlü ölçeğine göre insancılık ve kantçılık boyutunda kadınların ortalamasının daha yüksek olduğu ancak bu oranların istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bir fark oluşturmadığı görülmüştür. Korelasyon analizi sonuçlarına göre karanlık üçlü alt boyutları ve aydınlık üçlü alt boyutları arasında pozitif yönlü anlamlı ilişki bulunmuştur.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Aydınlik Üçlü, Karanlık Üçlü, Kişilik, Spor Yöneticisi.

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## **Introduction**

The success of sports management is not limited to performance or financial resources but is directly related to the personality traits and managerial skills of the individuals who govern these structures. Sports managers play a critical role at all levels of sport in making strategic decisions, utilizing resources effectively, and managing human relations in a healthy manner (Sarıkol, 2023). Accordingly, the personality traits of managers emerge as a decisive factor influencing both individual management styles and performance outcomes.

Personality is defined as a holistic construct encompassing the cognitive and social aspects of the individual. It is considered a set of enduring characteristics shaped not only by genetic predispositions but also by environmental interactions, and it does not easily change over time (Goldberg, 1992). Personality also refers to the combination of innate and acquired characteristics that distinguish individuals from one another and remain consistent throughout life (Taymur & Türkçapar, 2012). Among the approaches developed to explain the fundamental dimensions of personality, trait theory emphasizes the systematic analysis of the relationships between personality traits and behaviors (Vural, 2023). Various theories and dimensions in the field of personality aim to examine both positive and negative characteristics in a systematic manner. In this context, the “Light Triad,” which reflects the ethical and prosocial aspects of human nature, and the “Dark Triad,” which represents manipulative and harmful tendencies, have gained prominence.

The personality traits of sports managers not only support individual success but also play an important role in ensuring organizational effectiveness and sustainable management processes. Within this framework, the present study aims to determine the Light and Dark Triad personality traits of sports managers, to compare them according to demographic variables, and to examine the relationships among these traits.

Given the limited number of studies on this topic in the literature and the absence of similar research focusing specifically on sports managers, this study is expected to provide an original contribution. The findings are anticipated to offer significant implications for both the academic literature and managerial practices in the field of sports management.

### ***Light Triad Personality Traits***

The concept of the Light Triad was first introduced in the literature by Johnson in 2018. Subsequently, Kaufman et al. (2019) examined it systematically and consolidated it under the framework of “light personality traits.” Emerging as a reflection of the paradigm shift in positive psychology, the Light Triad is conceptualized around prosocial and ethical dispositions such as

altruism, gratitude, hope, courage, love, and trust (Stavraki et al., 2022). Research has demonstrated that Light Triad personality traits consist of three interrelated but conceptually distinct dimensions: faith in humanity, humanism, and Kantianism (Lukić & Živanović, 2021).

The faith in humanity dimension refers to the belief that individuals hold a fundamental conviction in the goodness of others. It emphasizes the positive potential of human nature and represents a shift from negative to positive orientations in attitudes and behaviors (Gerymski & Krok, 2019; Tekeş & Bıçaksız, 2021). Beliefs are frequently highlighted as influential on behavior, and this form of belief often debated among social psychologists supports the development of positive expectations toward the social world and fosters interpersonal trust (Lokshina et al., 2022). This tendency, which embodies an optimistic view of human nature, manifests in behaviors such as perceiving others as good, trusting them, and practicing forgiveness (Kaufman et al., 2019). Historically, this perspective was advocated by philosophers such as John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and later supported in psychology by humanist theorists including Alfred Adler, Abraham Maslow, and Carl Rogers (Evren, 2022).

The humanism dimension is grounded in the belief that every individual deserves respect for their inherent dignity and worth. It represents an ethical orientation based on genuine love and tolerance for humanity, regardless of religion, language, race, or cultural differences (Akbaş, 2021). According to Kaufman et al. (2019), this dimension is characterized by tendencies to admire, appreciate, and value others. The ability to actively listen to others is also considered a hallmark of humanistic dispositions.

The Kantianism dimension emphasizes the principle that individuals should be regarded not merely as means to an end but as inherently valuable beings in their own right. This dimension is directly rooted in Immanuel Kant's moral philosophy (Kaufman et al., 2019). According to Kant (1982), rational beings are ends in themselves and must never be instrumentalized. In this regard, Kantianism highlights values such as honesty, authenticity, avoidance of manipulation, and empathy, serving as an expression of ethical orientation in personality (Kaufman et al., 2019).

### ***Dark Triad Personality Traits***

The concept of the Dark Triad was introduced into the literature by Paulhus and Williams (2002) to describe negative personality tendencies. It focuses on socially undesirable, norm-violating, and harmful aspects of personality, and consists of three sub-dimensions: narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism.

Narcissism has been examined as a dark personality trait for more than a century. While often associated with self-admiration, arrogance, and selfishness, Sigmund Freud conceptualized narcissism as a clinical phenomenon characterized by excessive self-love, admiration, and the need for praise, as well as a fear of losing self-esteem and a lack of compassion. In social and personality psychology, however, narcissism is not only considered pathological but also examined as a dimension within the spectrum of normal personality traits, with both adaptive and maladaptive aspects (Dowgwillo et al., 2016). Narcissistic individuals typically display egocentric attitudes, perceive themselves as unique and privileged, and may experience feelings of worthlessness when they do not receive sufficient attention or respect (Necula, 2020).

Machiavellianism has been defined in various ways in the literature, but within the framework of the Dark Triad theory, it is generally understood as a personality trait characterized by prioritizing one's own interests over those of others and instrumentalizing people to achieve personal goals (Christie & Geis, 1970; Paulhus & Williams, 2002). This trait is associated with maintaining social reputation, adapting to environmental conditions, and skillfully employing manipulative tactics in long-term strategic planning. Individuals high in Machiavellianism often engage in antisocial behaviors (Jones & Paulhus, 2012).

Psychopathy, another personality trait within the Dark Triad, is characterized by emotional deficits, impulsivity, antisocial behaviors, and a tendency toward criminality (Ün et al., 2018). In non-clinical populations, psychopathy is considered a personality trait rather than a clinical disorder, manifesting in milder forms that do not necessarily impair functionality or meet diagnostic criteria (Gustafson & Ritzer, 1995). Importantly, the manifestations of dark personality traits do not appear uniformly across individuals, reflecting variability in how these tendencies are expressed (Rogoza & Ciecuch, 2019).

## **Method**

### ***Research Model***

The study was designed within the framework of the relational survey model, one of the quantitative research methods, and data were collected using the questionnaire technique (Karasar, 2016).

### ***Research Group***

The study group consisted of 242 volunteer sports managers working in the sports services units of the Provincial Directorates of Youth and Sports. Data were collected using purposive sampling.

### **Data Collection Tools**

The questionnaire consisted of three sections: (1) a personal information form prepared by the researcher, collecting data on age, gender, educational status, marital status, and years of service; (2) the Dark Triad scale developed by Jones and Paulhus (2014) and adapted into Turkish by Ermiş et al. (2018), consisting of 27 items across three sub-dimensions (Machiavellianism, narcissism, psychopathy), with Cronbach's  $\alpha$  values of .94, .93, and .93 respectively; and (3) the Light Triad scale developed by Kaufman et al. (2019) and adapted into Turkish by Pektaş & Durmuş (2022), consisting of 12 items across three sub-dimensions (faith in humanity, humanism, Kantianism), with Cronbach's  $\alpha$  values of .71, .71, and .86, and an overall reliability of .83.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS 22. After handling missing data and outliers, reliability analyses were performed. Normality was assessed based on skewness and kurtosis values, and since the data showed normal distribution, parametric tests were applied. Independent samples t-tests were used to examine differences by gender, marital status, and educational level; one-way ANOVA was conducted for age and years of service; and Pearson correlation analysis was employed to identify relationships among the scales.

### **Data Collection**

In addition to an online questionnaire prepared via Google Forms, data were also collected through face-to-face methods. The online questionnaire was distributed to participants through digital platforms such as WhatsApp and e-mail in August 2025. In both methods, participants were provided with an informed consent form; those who approved continued with the survey online, while in the face-to-face method, participants signed the consent form before proceeding.

### **Findings**

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Sports Managers Participating in the Study

Characteristic	Category	N	%
Age	28-36 years	36	14,9
	37-41 years	54	22,3
	42 years and above	152	62,8
Gender	Male	213	88,0
	Female	29	12,0
Educational Status	Bachelor's degree	173	71,5
	Postgraduate	69	28,5

Marital Status	Married	204	84,3
	Single	38	15,7
Years of Service	0-5 years	23	9,5
	6-12 years	74	30,6
	13-20 years	84	34,7
	21 years and above	61	25,2
Total		242	%100

Note. N = 242. Percentages may not total exactly 100 due to rounding.

Table 1 Of the participants, 62.8% were aged 42 and above, 22.3% were between 37 and 41 years, and 14.9% were between 28 and 36 years. In terms of gender, 88% of the participants were male and 12% were female. Regarding educational level, 71.5% held a bachelor's degree, while 28.5% had completed postgraduate education. With respect to marital status, 84.3% of the participants were married, whereas 15.7% were single. Considering years of service, 9.5% had 0–5 years of experience, 30.6% had 6–12 years, 34.7% had 13–20 years, and 25.2% had 21 years or more of service.

Table 2

#### Reliability, Skewness and Kurtosis Values of Research Data

Variable	Machiavellianism	Narcissism	Psychopathy	Faith in Humanity	Humanism	Kantianism
N	242	242	242	242	242	242
M	2.83	2.97	2.25	3.62	3.95	3.89
SD	0.664	0.607	0.603	0.816	0.857	0.906
Skewness	0.823	-0.536	0.773	-0.917	-1.40	-1.45
Kurtosis	0.354	0.712	1.68	0.989	1.42	1.19
Cronbach's $\alpha$	.73	.70	.70	.80	.91	.78

Note. N = sample size; M = mean; SD = standard deviation; Cronbach's  $\alpha$  = internal consistency reliability coefficient. Skewness and kurtosis values describe the shape of the distribution.

Table 2 it was determined that the research data were distributed within the range of +1.5 to -1.5. According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2013), this indicates that the data show a normal distribution. Furthermore, the Cronbach's alpha coefficients of the scales were found to range between .70 and .91. Based on Büyüköztürk (2018), these values suggest that the data possess a high level of reliability.

The findings revealed that participants scored at a moderate level on Machiavellianism and narcissism, while psychopathy was observed at a low level. Among the Dark Triad traits, managers exhibited the highest levels of narcissism and the lowest levels of psychopathy. In terms of the Light Triad traits, overall scores were high, with the highest mean observed in the humanism dimension.

Table 3

Comparison of the Dark Triad and Light Triad According to Gender Variable

Variable	Group	N	M	Sd	p
Machiavellianism	Male	213	2.82	0.670	.675
	Female	29	2.88	0.632	
Narcissism	Male	213	2.93	0.610	.020*
	Female	29	3.21	0.529	
Psychopathy	Male	213	2.24	0.608	.593
	Female	29	2.31	0.572	
Faith in Humanity	Male	213	3.63	0.844	.585
	Female	29	3.54	0.567	
Humanism	Male	213	3.91	0.890	.080
	Female	29	4.21	0.491	
Kantianism	Male	213	3.87	0.924	.370
	Female	29	4.03	0.761	

\*p < 0.05

Table 3 shows that a statistically significant difference was identified between the narcissism subscale of the Dark Triad and the gender variable at the p < 0.05 level. Female managers were found to have higher scores on the narcissism subscale compared to their male counterparts.

Table 4

Comparison of the Dark Triad and Light Triad According to Age Variable

Variable	Group	N	M	Sd	p	Tukey Post-Hoc
Machiavellianism	28-36 years	A	36	2.98	.024**	C<A,B
	37-41 years	B	54	2.98		
	42 years and above	C	152	2.74		
Narcissism	28-36 years	A	36	3.09	.090	
	37-41 years	B	54	3.07		
	42 years and above	C	152	2.90		
Psychopathy	28-36 years	A	36	2.49	.030*	A>B,C
	37-41 years	B	54	2.19		
	42 years and above	C	152	2.21		
Faith in Humanity	28-36 years	A	36	3.48	.051	
	37-41 years	B	54	3.87		
	42 years and above	C	152	3.57		
Humanism	28-36 years	A	36	4.03	.629	
	37-41 years	B	54	3.97		
	42 years and above	C	152	3.91		
Kantianism	28-36 years	A	36	3.83	.818	
	37-41 years	B	54	3.95		
	42 years and above	C	152	3.88		

\*p < 0.05

Table 4 shows that it was found that sports managers aged 42 years and above scored significantly lower on the Machiavellianism subscale compared to those aged 28–36 and 37–41, at the p < 0.05 level. Furthermore, managers in the 28–36 age group scored significantly higher on the psychopathy subscale than those aged 37–41 and 42 years and above, also at the p < 0.05 level.

Table 5

### Comparison of Dark Triad and Light Triad Personality Traits According to Educational Status Variable

Variable	Group	N	M	Sd	p
Machiavellianism	Bachelor's degree	173	2.81	0.674	0.415
	Postgraduate	69	2.88	0.642	
Narcissism	Bachelor's degree	173	2.93	0.626	0.151
	Postgraduate	69	3.05	0.551	
Psychopathy	Bachelor's degree	173	2.22	0.573	0.287
	Postgraduate	69	2.32	0.673	
Faith in Humanity	Bachelor's degree	173	3.54	0.848	0.012*
	Postgraduate	69	3.83	0.689	
Humanism	Bachelor's degree	173	3.91	0.886	0.279
	Postgraduate	69	4.04	0.777	
Kantianism	Bachelor's degree	173	3.83	0.958	0.110
	Postgraduate	69	4.04	0.746	

\*p < 0.05

Table 5 shows that it was found that sports managers with postgraduate education scored significantly higher on the faith in humanity subscale of the Light Triad compared to those with only a bachelor's degree, at the p < 0.05 level.

Table 6

### Comparison of Dark Triad and Light Triad Personality Traits According to Marital Status Variable

Variable	Group	N	M	Sd	p
Machiavellianism	Married	204	2.82	0.671	0.506
	Single	38	2.89	0.635	
Narcissism	Married	204	2.95	0.600	0.446
	Single	38	3.04	0.647	
Psychopathy	Married	204	2.24	0.610	0.409
	Single	38	2.32	0.562	
Faith in Humanity	Married	204	3.67	0.795	0.037*
	Single	38	3.37	0.887	
Humanism	Married	204	3.96	0.847	0.656
	Single	38	3.89	0.920	
Kantianism	Married	204	3.93	0.880	0.148
	Single	38	3.70	1.027	

\*p < 0.05

Table 6 shows that it was found that married sports managers scored significantly higher on the faith in humanity subscale of the Light Triad compared to single managers, at the p < 0.05 level.

Table 7

### Comparison of Dark Triad and Light Triad Personality Traits According to Years of Service Variable

Variable	Group	N	M	Sd	p	Tukey Post-Hoc	
Machiavellianism	0-5 years	A	23	3.25	0.616	0.001***	A<B,D
	6-12 years	B	74	2.83	0.605		
	13-20 years	C	84	2.87	0.741		
	21 years and above	D	61	2.62	0.561		
Narcissism	0-5 years	A	23	3.13	0.561	0.132	

	6-12 years	B	74	2.93	0.555	
	13-20 years	C	84	3.04	0.647	
	21 years and above	D	61	2.84	0.612	
Psychopathy	0-5 years	A	23	2.44	0.587	0.187
	6-12 years	B	74	2.24	0.541	
	13-20 years	C	84	2.28	0.675	
	21 years and above	D	61	2.14	0.564	
Faith in Humanity	0-5 years	A	23	3.49	0.871	0.568
	6-12 years	B	74	3.66	0.776	
	13-20 years	C	84	3.69	0.824	
	21 years and above	D	61	3.53	0.834	
Humanism	0-5 years	A	23	4.09	0.891	0.844
	6-12 years	B	74	3.96	0.735	
	13-20 years	C	84	3.93	0.928	
	21 years and above	D	61	3.90	0.894	
Kantianism	0-5 years	A	23	3.88	0.920	0.999
	6-12 years	B	74	3.88	0.895	
	13-20 years	C	84	3.90	0.886	
	21 years and above	D	61	3.90	0.962	

\*p < 0.05

Table 7 shows that it was found that sports managers with 0–5 years of service scored significantly higher on the Machiavellianism subscale compared to those with 6–12 years and 21 years or more of service, at the p < 0.05 level.

Table 8

Results of Pearson Correlation Analysis Between the Dark Triad and the Light Triad

Variable	Statistics	Machiavellianism	Narcissism	Psychopathy	Faith in Humanity	Humanism
Narcissism	Pearson's r	0.554***	—	—	—	—
	df	240	—	—	—	—
	p-value	<.001	—	—	—	—
Psychopathy	Pearson's r	0.543***	0.402***	—	—	—
	df	240	240	—	—	—
	p-value	<.001	<.001	—	—	—
Faith in Humanity	Pearson's r	0.180**	0.359***	-0.019	—	—
	df	240	240	240	—	—
	p-value	0.005	<.001	0.765	—	—
Humanism	Pearson's r	0.275***	0.467***	0.014	0.666***	—
	df	240	240	240	240	—
	p-value	<.001	<.001	0.832	<.001	—
Kantianism	Pearson's r	0.243***	0.337***	-0.026	0.507***	0.675***
	df	240	240	240	240	240
	p-value	<.001	<.001	0.686	<.001	<.001

Note. Pearson correlation coefficients (r), degrees of freedom (df:240), and p-values are reported. \*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01

Table 8 A low-level positive correlation was identified between the Machiavellianism subscale of the Dark Triad and the components of the Light Triad scale, whereas narcissism demonstrated a moderate positive correlation with the Light Triad subscales. On the other hand, no significant relationship was observed between the psychopathy subscale of the Dark Triad and the Light Triad dimensions of faith in humanity, humanism, and Kantianism.

## Discussion

In our study, which aimed to determine the levels of light and dark triad personality traits among sports managers and to examine differences according to demographic variables, the data were interpreted and discussed within the framework of the literature.

Based on the findings, it was determined that the light triad personality traits of the sports managers participating in the study were higher than their dark triad traits. When the light triad traits were evaluated individually, sports managers were found to possess the highest level of humanism and the lowest level of faith in humanity. In terms of the dark triad traits, managers displayed the highest level of narcissism and the lowest level of psychopathy (Table 2).

High levels of light personality traits indicate that managers adopt positive personality tendencies and behaviors that respect human rights, such as empathy. A light personality refers to a disposition characterized by tolerance, helpfulness, and sincerity towards others. Individuals with these traits are also distinguished by their ability to express unconditional love with sincerity and purity (Farah Bijari et al., 2022). Indeed, the literature emphasizes that individuals with high levels of light triad traits tend to exhibit prosocial behavior, a greater willingness to help others, and higher levels of psychological well-being (March & Marrington, 2021; Stavradi et al., 2022; Ruel et al., 2023). In this context, it can be expected that sports managers who possess these traits will contribute to the development of a constructive and inclusive organizational culture.

The relatively high level of narcissistic traits among managers may stem from the instinct to protect one's status in relationships with other individuals in managerial positions. Narcissism is defined as an exaggerated self-image constructed by the individual to suppress characteristics they lack and unmet psychological needs. Narcissists act according to an internal scenario in which they attribute superiority and extraordinary abilities to themselves in order to conceal their shortcomings and inadequacies in their environment (Özsoy & Ardiç, 2017). In this regard, Kernberg (2012) states that narcissists "have a desire to be admired and believe themselves to be more valuable than others in order to avoid showing their inadequacies."

Another sub-dimension, psychopathy, can be explained by the deterrent nature of disciplinary measures outlined in Turkey's Civil Servants Law, which may prevent managers with these traits from exhibiting such behaviors. Previous studies have shown that individuals with high levels of psychopathy may engage in behaviors that cause tension in the workplace and negatively affect communication within the organization (Johnson et al., 2015). In this context, it can be argued that the legal provisions to which managers working in public sports organizations in Turkey are subject may function as a control mechanism over their behaviors.

### ***Analyses According to Demographic Variables***

According to the findings, female sports managers scored significantly higher than male managers on the narcissism subscale of the Dark Triad personality traits. No significant differences were observed in the other subscales of the Dark Triad or in the subscales of the Light Triad (Table 3). The higher levels of narcissism among female managers compared to their male counterparts may be attributed to the limited representation of women in managerial positions in Turkey, as well as to gender roles and institutional inequalities. Gender refers to the socially constructed roles and responsibilities assigned to women and men based on biological sex, shaping their positions in society and the behaviors expected of them. In a study conducted by Durmuş (2024) on academics, similar to our findings, female academics were found to exhibit higher levels of narcissistic traits. This was interpreted as women developing narcissistic tendencies as part of their efforts to prove themselves and secure a place in society. Parallel results have also been reported in studies on educators, where female teachers demonstrated higher narcissistic personality tendencies compared to male teachers (Karataş & Taş, 2017; Uçar & Konar, 2018). However, contrary to our findings, some studies conducted with different occupational groups and samples reported no significant differences between men and women in the narcissism subscale (Atay, 2010; Kiraz, 2011; Çoban & İrmiş, 2018; Ermiş, 2019). On the other hand, other research has shown that men exhibit more dominant narcissistic personality traits than women (Grijalva et al., 2015; Eren, 2012; Tarakçı, 2024). These differences may be explained by cultural contexts and variations across sample groups.

According to the age variable, it was found that sports managers aged 42 and above scored significantly lower on the Machiavellianism subscale of the Dark Triad compared to those aged 28–36 and 37–41. In contrast, managers aged 28–36 scored significantly higher on the psychopathy subscale than managers aged 37–41 and those aged 42 and above. No significant differences were observed in the other subscales (Table 4). The lower levels of Machiavellianism among managers aged 42 and above compared to younger managers may be explained by the increase in experience and maturity with age, which reduces the tendency to engage in manipulative behaviors. On the other hand, the higher psychopathy scores among managers aged 28–36 may reflect a greater inclination toward risky behaviors in the early stages of their careers, possibly as a means of advancing more quickly. Aggressive behaviors and lack of empathy, which are typical characteristics of psychopathy (Barlett, 2016), may also be associated with the adaptation process during the initial years of professional life. The literature supports these findings, with similar results reported in previous studies (Özcihan, 2014; Özer et al., 2016; Durmuş, 2024).

In terms of educational status, sports managers with postgraduate education scored significantly higher on the faith in humanity subscale of the Light Triad compared to those with

undergraduate education. No significant differences were found in the other subscales of the Dark Triad or the Light Triad (Table 5). This finding suggests that the knowledge and experience gained through postgraduate education may contribute to the development of a more inclusive personality structure, both for personal growth and in interactions with other actors in the field of sports. As the level of education increases, individuals' faith in humanity also appears to rise. Indeed, Duman (2023), in a study conducted on coaches, found that high school graduate coaches scored significantly lower on faith in humanity compared to those with undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. This result supports the findings of our study.

In the faith in humanity subscale of the Light Triad, married sports managers scored significantly higher than single managers. No significant differences were observed in the other subscales of either the Dark Triad or the Light Triad (Table 6). This finding may be related to the contribution of marriage to values such as empathy, responsibility, and social solidarity. Marriage can foster sensitivity not only toward one's spouse but also toward a broader social environment over time, thereby promoting a worldview that emphasizes human values. Values are defined as beliefs about good and bad behaviors, as well as desirable and undesirable characteristics (Dilmaç et al., 2009). Individuals' behaviors, thought patterns, and attitudes are directly or indirectly shaped by the values they hold (Dilmaç & Ekşi, 2012). In this context, the influence of marriage on personality traits, belief systems, and accepted values becomes evident. Supporting our findings, Çiftçi (2024) reported that married participants scored higher on faith in humanity compared to single participants. However, other studies have found no significant differences according to marital status (Akdemir et al., 2023; Kavak, 2024).

When the findings were examined according to years of service, it was determined that managers with 0–5 years of service scored significantly higher on the Machiavellianism subscale of the Dark Triad compared to those with 6–12 years and 21 years or more of service. No significant differences were found in the other subscales of either scale (Table 7). The higher levels of Machiavellianism among managers with 0–5 years of service may be explained by the fact that they are at the beginning of their careers. During this period, when professional experience is still limited, managers may display manipulative or self-serving behaviors as part of their adaptation process. İncekara and Doğan (2025) emphasized that planning support and training programs during the adaptation process for newcomers, as well as peer support, can strengthen organizational commitment. In this context, the lower Machiavellian tendencies among managers with more than six years of service may reflect the development of professional maturity and organizational loyalty. On the other hand, Yeniçeri (2024), in a study conducted on private sector employees, found no significant differences in Machiavellianism according to years of work experience. This may be

explained by the competitive nature of the private sector, where performance-based evaluation systems, promotion, and reward mechanisms are more dynamic, leading individuals to avoid manipulative or self-serving behaviors. Conversely, other studies have reported findings that differ from ours (Ermiş, 2019; Özer et al., 2016; Aydoğan & Serbest, 2016).

### ***Correlation-Based Analyses***

Our study revealed that Machiavellianism and narcissism, two sub-dimensions of the Dark Triad, showed significant and positive correlations with the Light Triad sub-dimensions of faith in humanity, humanism, and Kantianism (Table 8).

This finding indicates that both dark and light tendencies may coexist within individuals' personality structures. Kaufman et al. (2019) emphasized that light and dark personality traits should not be considered as opposites, but rather as dimensions that can simultaneously manifest in the same individual. Every person may reflect both dark and light traits, and the critical issue is which traits are more dominant. The absence or low levels of dark traits does not necessarily imply the presence or dominance of light traits. Both sets of traits can appear independently at varying levels in individuals (Watson et al., 1988; Polatçı & Yeloğlu, 2021). Furthermore, individuals with narcissistic and Machiavellian tendencies may emphasize ethical values or appear to conform to social norms due to their orientation toward presenting themselves positively, gaining status, and influencing others in social contexts. Particularly, narcissistic tendencies may lead individuals to strategically adopt more humane or moral behaviors in line with their desire for acceptance and admiration. Similarly, Machiavellian individuals may express beliefs in human values for instrumental reasons, such as reputation or power acquisition.

On the other hand, the absence of significant correlations between psychopathy and any of the Light Triad sub-dimensions suggests that psychopathy occupies a more extreme position within personality structures, deviating from social norms. The lack of empathy, antisocial tendencies, and avoidance of responsibility characteristic of psychopathy make it difficult for individuals to feel humane or moral responsibility toward others. This distinction highlights psychopathy as the most divergent trait among the Dark Triad, as it is less compatible with positive beliefs about human nature or values that prioritize the well-being of others.

Overall, these findings suggest that while Machiavellianism and narcissism may align with prosocial tendencies under certain conditions, psychopathy remains largely incompatible with Light Triad traits.

### **Conclusion**

This study, by examining the demographic characteristics of sports managers and the relationships between the Dark Triad (narcissism, Machiavellianism, psychopathy) and the Light Triad (faith in humanity, humanism, Kantianism), has revealed important findings regarding managers' personality traits. The results provide theoretical contributions to the field of sports management as well as practical implications for organizational practices.

In conclusion, it was found that sports managers exhibited moderate levels of Machiavellianism and narcissism, low levels of psychopathy, and high levels of Light Triad personality traits. Specifically, within the Dark Triad, women scored higher on narcissism compared to men, while younger managers demonstrated higher levels of Machiavellianism than middle-aged and older managers. Within the Light Triad, managers with postgraduate education and those who were married scored higher on faith in humanity.

Furthermore, a low-level positive correlation was identified between Machiavellianism and the Light Triad subscales, while narcissism showed a moderate positive correlation with the Light Triad subscales. On the other hand, no significant relationship was found between psychopathy and the Light Triad dimensions of faith in humanity, humanism, and Kantianism.

Taken together, these findings highlight the complex interplay between dark and light personality traits among sports managers, underscoring the importance of demographic and contextual factors in shaping managerial behavior.

### ***Recommendations***

The higher narcissism scores among female managers may be balanced through awareness and empathy-focused training programs. For male managers, collaboration-oriented training could help reduce gender-based differences.

For younger managers (aged 28–36), empathy development and psycho-social training programs should be implemented to mitigate psychopathy tendencies.

Postgraduate education appears to strengthen positive values such as faith in humanity. Therefore, sports managers should be encouraged to pursue postgraduate programs.

The higher Machiavellianism scores among managers with 0–5 years of service highlight the importance of ethical training seminars for this group.

The positive correlations between Machiavellianism and narcissism with Light Triad traits suggest that these characteristics should be managed in a balanced manner. In this regard, in-service training programs for managers should be organized and emphasized.

A review of the relevant literature indicates that research on this topic remains limited. Accordingly, future studies should apply the current framework to managers in different professional fields, conduct comparative analyses, and share the results. Such efforts are expected to contribute both to the academic literature and to decision-makers.

Overall, these recommendations aim to foster ethical, empathetic, and inclusive leadership practices in sports management, while also guiding future research directions in the field.

### **Ethics Committee Permission Information**

Ethics review board: This study was approved by the Ethics Committee of Gazi University.

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### **Authors' Contributions**

The first author contributed to the study design, introduction, data collection, analysis of findings, and the discussion and conclusion sections; the second author contributed to the study design, methodology, statistical analysis of the findings, and overall evaluation; and the third author contributed to the conclusion, recommendations, and translation sections.

### **Conflicts of Interest**

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding this research.

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