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SOCIAL MEDIA GRATIFICATIONS & ADDICTION: MODERATING INFLUENCE OF DARK TRIAD PERSONALITIES

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
	The social media usage has remained an increasingly worrying concern that sparks much debate on part of personality regarding social media addiction, the dark triad personality attributes. This paper examines the gratifications sought upon social media based on UGT and social media addiction with an emphasis on the dark triad personalities (Narcissism, Psychopathy as well as Machiavellianism as moderating variables. The dark triad personality traits are nefarious to oneself and others, hence, relevant to investigating social media addiction. Findings substantiate hypothesis that UGT is positively correlated with social media addiction, meaning that higher gratifications from SM lead to increased susceptibility to addiction. Still, as hypothesized, dark triad traits did not moderate effects; neither combined nor individual effects of Narcissism, Psychopathy, and Machiavellianism changed strength of relationship between UGT and social media addiction. These implications mean that although UGT is determinant of addiction, dark triad personality characteristics are not salient as moderators. Hence, those individuals who are driven by UGT are likely going to engage in development of addiction irrespective of the personality features that are known to result in the dark triad.
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INTRODUCTION

The social media has become an unavoidable and compulsive concern for all those who are using smartphones (Necula, 2020). A collection of websites and applications made or devised for the community engagement, partaking, interplay, alliance, and the evolution and upkeep of societal linkages is mentioned as social media. These podiums are normally formulated on user-generated

gunk, which potentiates that user agilely add to the gunk creation of websites and halters (Aleksic, Ljepava & Ristic, 2019). Social media need becomes indispensable in burgeoning technological era (Abbasi, 2019). Pakistan is witnessing 41.3 million social media handlers which is 21% of total community (Kemp, 2021). A plethora of public now encompasses social media in their day-to-day practices. As per sundry exploration, almost three billion public worldwide are linked to assorted social media podiums (Aleksic et al., 2019), as social media network communication is generic and allows the users to simply create groups (Bhatiasevi, 2024). Thus, social media sanctions users the happenstance to showcase their prowess to a wide listener, keep in touch with old and new contacts, share files, visuals, audio records, videos, and interact with others locally and internationally for tot, or gratification.

As per Khatri (2018), social media is about administering one's name and subsistence on a personal and professional level. The socialization process and easier interplay of mortals with mortals and herds is a secrecy of rapid widespread social media (Kumpasoğlu, Eltan, Merdan & Batıgün, 2021). Social media facility diverse digital podiums (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp) for real-time movements to interact with others by gabbing, sharing post, video, or tagging (Baltaci, 2019). The overdrive upon these platforms leads to addiction (Andreassen, Torsheim, Brunborg & Pallesen, 2012). The social media addiction originates from myriad psychological and societal woes such as angst, despondency, sleep woes, isolation from real drills, and destitute life quality in every age group (Wilson, 2015). Kuss and Griffiths (2011) shepherded that the number of addicted mortals to social media swells quickly every annum. Hou et al. (2019) shepherded that impacts of addictive social media utilization are significantly deleterious. The problematic social media addiction is related harmonizing to personality traits (Biolcati et al., 2018). The personality refers to individual differences in characteristic ways of sentiment, consideration, and behavior. A personality can have both dim and light sides. In this sense, three most observable aspects are psychopathy, narcissism, and Machiavellianism.

Paulhus and Williams (2002) backed grouping these three aspects to capture distinct distinctions in harmful potentials. These character attributes are also referred to as "dark triad." They contend that a person's moral convictions "fit" their nature. A person's judgments jive with the characteristics they own. According to Paulhus and Williams (2002), dark triad expresses disparate associations but has cold-hearted manipulating core in common. Because social media podiums provide certain opportunities, they can serve as a haven for the dark triad. Psychopaths, for example, may be drawn to the hindrance and privacy that online spaces offer, which makes it easier for them to manipulate or take advantage of others without worrying about consequences in real life. On the other side, narcissists might take advantage of social media's attention-seeking features to recurrently attract adulation and exaggerate their perception of themselves. Lastly, to obtain influence and control, Machiavellian people might purposefully create the online personas and manage social dynamics inside online networks including trolling or cyberbullying, which can further reinforce addictive patterns. The social media essentially provides instruments for the self-serving agendas, concealed identities, and lack of the immediate accountability, which are all in line with manipulative core of the dark triad.

This research aims to explore the relationship between dark trio personality features and obsession with social media in Pakistan, inspired by frameworks suggested by Whiting and Williams (2013). Kumpasoğlu et al. (2021) study lays a foundation for investigating the particular influences of the psychopathy, Malachi, and narcissism on social media usage trends. Whiting and Williams. (2013) revealed that uses and gratifications motivation model shall be utilized to examine fundamental factors contributing to why people with dark trio traits might be more prone to the social media addiction within the Pakistani context. By combining these frameworks, the study strives to clarify how Pakistani user identities interact with their motivations for interacting with the social media, possibly triggering addictive behaviors. The social media addiction is often discussed as a form of behavioral addiction that mirrors patterns seen in substance abuse, including preoccupation, loss of control, withdrawal, and negative impacts on daily life (Andreassen et al., 2022). However, these gratifications may lead to addictive behaviors, particularly when influenced by personality traits. A growing body of research has linked specific personality traits to likelihood of developing such addictions. Of particular interest is Dark Triad of personality traits: Machiavellianism, Narcissism, and Psychopathy.

These socially aversive traits are increasingly studied for moderating influence on social media use and addiction. Individuals high in the Narcissism may be particularly vulnerable to social media addiction due to their need for admiration and validation. Social media platforms offer prospects for self-promotion & recognition, which align closely with narcissistic tendencies. Machiavellians, who are characterized by manipulative and strategic behaviors, may use social media as a tool for personal gain, such as enhancing their professional image or exerting social influence (Wang et al., 2023). This strategic usage, while controlled, still lead to neurotic behaviors when their objectives hinge on the continuous engagement. Finally, individuals high in Psychopathy, who tend to exhibit impulsive & antisocial behaviors, may engage in reckless or harmful social media activity, including trolling, cyberbullying, which can further reinforce addictive patterns (Furnham & Treglown, 2022). The huge use of social media in Pakistan has concerned its impact on mental health and behaviors of its users. It is important to realize how media usage patterns are connected with unwanted character characteristics like 'dark triad' and relational hostility. Exploring these connections can aid in creating ways to promote more beneficial online surroundings & enhance positive exchanges among users.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The relationship between violent behavior and negative elements is supported by a literature review (Linton & Power, 2013). The current study sought to examine the connection amid teenage relational aggressiveness and the dark triangle and moral disengagement. No previous study has been conducted in Pakistan on this predictive association. There are studies on children about the adaptation of aggressive behavior from social media (Hassan et al., 2024). Further, there is urgent need to research these things because teenagers represent the future of every society, and they are crucial. According to this view, the people choose different media depending on their requirements and are autonomous in their selection of media. The active user or audience is at the center of uses & pleasure idea. According to this idea (Gruzd et al., 2017), media consumption is self-determining

and has no negative impacts. The theory prioritizes user or audience and holds that user is superior to the medium of communication (Sheikh et al., 2022). According to the theory, users and audiences are essential to the existence of media, and media depend on users and audiences to develop, use select, reject, rate content. According to Katz,, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1974), uses and gratification hypothesis implies that users and audiences will always have the final say through the medium they choose.

The mode, form, and content of media are deliberately chosen by the user or audience to satisfy a particular need; media do not influence the choice of media made by the user or audience (Manik, 2015). Machiavellianism, one of the three, had a whole different etiology. Nicolo Machiavelli in the 1500s commands emperors and nobility to maintain power through carefully thought-out and, when necessary, severe and immoral deeds, such as assassinating political rivals (Christie & Geis, 1968). Negative personality traits are associated with Narcissism, Machiavellianism & psychopathy which are called dark triads (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). Narcissism is derived from Greek myth of the Narcissus which means love for me. Narcissists desire admiration and attention. Campbell & Miller (2011) defined narcissism as a wish to attain power, grab attention, be critical, and be sensitive to criticism and aggressiveness. Psychopaths are considered to have minimal empathy, low fear, and impulsiveness. In this linking, Machiavellianism is supposed to have the behavioral qualities that involve focusing on their beliefs and interests while manipulating, deceiving, and exploiting others (Jonason & Middleton, 2015). Ghim et al. (2015) have further investigated the causal relationships between the relational aggression, internalized humiliation, annoyance contemplation, as well as disguised narcissism.

Social Media Addiction & Dark Personality Traits

Jauk and Dieterich (2019) found that the addiction and dark triad have a significant association. Similarly, Andreassen et al., (2017) investigated relationship between dark triad and social media addiction & found that Narcissism has positive relationship with social media addiction. Contrary to this, Kumpasoğlu et al. (2021) concluded that Machiavellianism and psychopathy are positively associated with social media addiction as Narcissism negatively predicts social media addiction. It encourages the researcher to seek mediating variables amid dark triad and social media addiction. Psychopathy, Machiavellianism & narcissism were predictors of reactive relational aggressiveness. Machiavellianism did not predict proactive relational aggression, while psychopathy & irrational narcissism were positive predictors of proactive relational hostility (Knight, 2016). Additionally, the relationship between psychopathy and aggression was examined concerning media aggression as a potential mediating factor. According to findings, psychopathy traits and relational aggression were related (Coyne et al., 2010). Moreover, study examined the relationship between relational aggressiveness and psychopathic traits in a sample of teenage girls in confinement. The relational aggressiveness & psychopathic traits are positively correlated, according to correlational analyses (Marotta, 2016).

Theoretical Framework

The Uses and Gratification theory refers to an understanding of why people are motivated to use media to satisfy their needs (Katz et al., 1974). The theory of uses & gratifications has been implying

largely to check why people use the social media (Apuke & Omar, 2021). Ashrianto and Yustitia (2020) known that due to advancement in technology, people don't solely depend on traditional mass media, so to gratify their needs they rely on different channels of social media. Whiting and Williams (2013) branded ten motives for understanding Uses and Gratification, Social Interaction, Information seeking, Pass time, Entertainment, Relaxation, Expression of opinions, Communicatory Utility, Convenience utility, Information sharing; & Surveillance or knowledge about others. Uses and gratification inspire the "active user" phenomenon, in which users maintain complete control over what media they choose to consume or reject (Ali & Hassan, 2016). The "uses and gratification" approach offers a viewpoint for empirical investigation of several theories on choice, consumption, and impact of media.

Uses & Gratification Themes in Social Media Addiction

Ten themes of uses and gratification presented by Whiting and Williams (2013) have a significant relationship between internet addiction and social media usage. Another study conducted by Cao et al. (2020) identified a positive significant relationship amid social media interaction, enjoyment, informational support, and attachment with social media addiction. Hussain & Shabir (2020) also emphasized that social media plays an important role in gathering and discovering information. Leong et al. (2019) also maintained that information-seeking and entertainment have a positive relationship with social media addiction. A study examined relationship amid several disruptive and dangerous adult behaviors, psychopathic emotional traits, and ethically detached methods. Research on the role those psychopathic traits and moral disengagement alone play in predicting unhelpful behavior revealed that, morally disengaged approaches wholly predicted academic dishonesty, psychopathic traits, moral detachment together remarkably display non-aggressive antisocial behaviors (Risser & Eckert, 2016). How new media might support education, learning, and participatory studies is discussed by Henthorn and Cammack (2017). According to Gudelunas (2012), there is app for every need & using apps to satisfy media needs is commonly acknowledged phenomenon.

As instructors, students, scholars, and teachers use the social media to satisfy their media-related academic needs, the theoretical binding of uses and gratification validates the contribution of the social media to education (Karimi, Khodabandelou, Ehsani & Ahmad, 2014; Ramazan, Hassan, & Basit, 2023; Hassan, Amin & Iqbal, 2023). Literature that has already written has acknowledged and discussed the use of social media for political awareness, media literacy, knowledge sharing, and group communication (Katz et al., 1974). The study between the uses and gratification theme and the dark triad is very limited, however, some of the themes were checked on the dark triad by Kumpasoğlu et al. (2021). McCain, Borg, Rothenberg, Churillo, Weiler and Campbell (2016) found that personality projection by sharing selfies has a significant positive relationship. Similarly, Jin et al., (2019) found a positive relationship between social media addiction through self-esteem. On the other hand, Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy are negatively associated with the relationship satisfaction, so in response, they are negatively related to the social media addiction (Demircioğlu & Köse, 2018). as these traits amplify the dependency on social media for validation, manipulation, and stimulation and based on literature, researcher proposed the following research question and model.

What is the role of dark personality traits between uses and gratification themes and social media addiction?

Research Hypothesis
1. The social media addiction is significantly dependent on the uses & gratification
2. Dark triads moderate between social media addiction and uses and gratification
3. Narcissism moderates between social media addiction and uses and gratification
4. The Psychopathy moderates the links between the social media addiction & uses
5. The Machiavellianism moderates between the social media addiction & the uses

Figure 1 Research Model
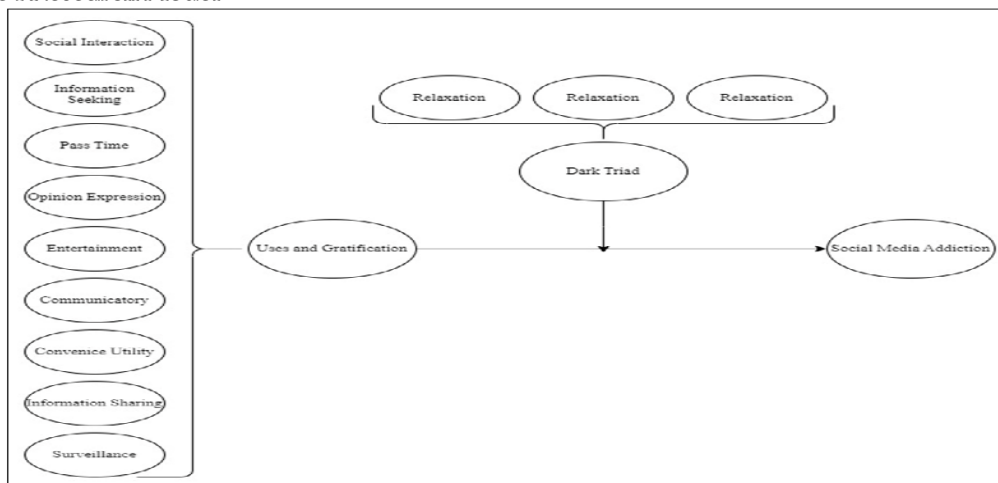
The study is aimed to investigate the role of the dark triad between uses and gratification themes and social media addiction. In quantitative studies, survey methods are largely used in testing the relationship prediction, or causation in the field of media (Gunter, 2000). So, the survey was carried out in this study and the data was collected by electronic survey methods which on Google Forms, the link was created and distributed on different platforms to get the data because of the academic situation in the country. All the constructs, that were used in survey were adopted from different, published works. The population of the study was students of the different universities of Lahore. By using the convenience sampling technique, data was gathered. It was observed that only 317 responses were valid. So, after missing analysis and checking the reliability and validity further analysis was conducted. There were three main variables in the study, one independent variable, uses and gratification (UGT). Eight themes of uses and gratification were adopted from (Froget et al., 2013). Consequently, the 25 items were measured on a Likert scale from 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree, followed by 1. "You use social media to meet new people".2. "You use social media to keep in touch with people you met online" 3. "You use social media to find others who have same interests".

4 "You use social media to share ideas and opinions".5. "You use social media to help others".6 "You use social media to occupy your free time". 7 "You use social media to entertain yourself". 8 "You

use social media to pass time when bored". 9 "You use social media to keep in touch with friends". 10 "You use social media to keep in touch with friends or relatives who live far away". 11 "You use social media to learn about Social events" 12 "You use social media to learn about new music" 13 "You use social media to share videos".14 "You use social media to share photos".15 "You use social media to watch uploaded Items (audio, videos, photos)". 16 "You use social media to discuss new products with others". 17 "You use social media to learn about the latest products from friends". 18 "You use social media to discuss topics you care about". 19. "You use social media to participate in a group discussion". 20 "You use social media to give your opinion on a topic of discussion". 21 "You use social media to respond to others' discussion on topics of interest to you". 22 "You use social media to search for information you need". 23. "You use social media to get information need".24 "you use social media to find out things you need to know".25 "you use social media to get answers to specific questions".

Social media addiction was taken as a dependent variable in this study. The construct is measured by adopting the scale of (Kumpasoğlu et al., 2021). It has six items measured on a Likert scale 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree, followed by 1. "You spend a lot of time, when you're not online, thinking about social media or planning to use social media" 2. "You feel urges to use social media more & more over time" 3. "You use social media to forget about personal problems" 4. "You often try to reduce your use of social media, without success" 5. "You become restless or troubled if you are unable to use social media" 6. "You use social media so much that it has hurt your job, relationship, or studies". Dark Triad including three dimensions (Machiavellianism, Narcissism, and Psychopathy) was measured by 27 items & each triad includes 9 items. Personality traits have been adopted from Jones and Paulhus (2014), measured on Likert scale 1=strongly disagree to 7 strongly agree. Machiavellianism is measured by 9 items, followed by 1. "It's not wise to tell your secrets." 2. "I like to use clever manipulation to get my way." 3. "Whatever it takes, you must get the important people on your side." 4." Avoid direct conflict with others because they may be useful in the future." 5. "It's wise to keep track of information that you can use against people later." 6. "You should wait for the right time to get back at people." 7. "There are things you should hide from other people to preserve your reputation." 8. "Make sure your plans benefit yourself, not others. 9. Most people can be manipulated."

Narcissism is also measured by 9 items three items were reversed coded which were recoded according to the construct followed by 1." People see me as a natural leader." 2. "I hate being the center of attention. (R)" 3. "Many group activities tend to be dull without me." 4. "I know that I am special because everyone keeps telling me so." 5. "I like to get acquainted with important people." 6." I feel embarrassed if someone compliments me." (R) 7." I have been compared to famous people." 8. "I am an average person. (R) 9. "I insist on getting the respect I deserve." Psychopathy is also measured by 9 items but the eighth number item was excluded moreover two items were reversed coded which were recoded according to the construct, followed by, 1. "I like to get revenge on authorities." 2. "I avoid dangerous situations. (R)" 3. "Payback needs to be quick and nasty." 4. "People often say I'm out of control." 5. "It's true that I can be mean to others." 6. "People who mess with me always regret it." 7. "I have never gotten into trouble with the law. (R)' 8. "I enjoy having sex

with the people I hardly know" 9. "I'll say anything to get what I want." Internal consistency was measured by the Cronbach's Alpha which is vastly used in social sciences studies to check the reliability. Its value greater than 0.7 is considered fair and reliable in social sciences. Table 1 shows the reliability measures. UGT have (M=5.29, SD=0.88, Alpha=0.89), Dark Triad have (M=0.443, SD= 0.75, Alpha= 0.86), SMA (M=3.47, SD= 0.84, Alpha=0.84), Psychopathy (M=3.64, SD= 1.43, Alpha= 0.91), Narcissism (M=4.79, SD= 0.77, Alpha= 0.74), Machiavellianism (M= 4.85, SD= 1.02, Alpha= 0.83).

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics & Cronbach Alpha

Variables	Mean	SD	Alpha
UGT	5.29	0.88	0.89
Dark Triad	4.43	0.75	0.86
Social Media Addiction	3.47	0.84	0.84
Psychopathy	3.64	1.43	0.91
Narcissism	4.79	0.77	0.74
Machiavellianism	4.85	1.02	0.83

DATA ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION

It was found that there were almost 82% of the respondents were males 16% were female students and 2% preferred not to tell. Similarly, majority of the students belonged to urban areas 96% and 2% belonged to rural while 2% preferred not to tell. Table 2 shows correlation. Which, social media addiction has a significant relationship with uses gratification themes, but it does not have any relationship between Dart Triad & simultaneously its themes. UGT has significant relationship with Narcissism. Meanwhile Dark Triad has very strong relationship with Psychopathy, Narcissism, and Machiavellianism.

Table 2 Correlation Matrix

Variables	SMA	UGT	Dark Triad	Psychopathy	Narcissism
UGT	.281**				
Dark Triad	.178	.154			
Psychopathy	.121	.002	.755**		
Narcissism	.060	.231*	.643**	.198*	
Machiavellianism	.178	.163	.662**	.119	.386**
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).					
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).					

Hypothesis Testing

In hypothesis 1, Social media addiction significantly depends upon uses and gratification, which is accepted as (b=0.27, p<0.01) so, Uses and gratification significantly predict social media addiction. But in the hypothesis 2, the Dark triads moderate between social media addiction and uses and gratification, there is not enough evidence to accept the hypothesis, similarly, Hypotheses 3,4 and 5 Narcissism moderates between social media addiction and uses and gratification also did not accept, psychopathy moderates between social media addiction and uses and gratification also did

not accept, Machiavellianism moderates between social media addiction and uses as well as the gratification also did not accept. As (b=0.18, p=0.13), (b=0.12, p=0.53), (b=-0.06, p=0.31) and (b=-.03, p=0.74).

Table 3 Regression Results

Relationship	B	P value
UGT->SMA	0.27	0.00
UGT-DT->SMA	0.18	0.13
UGT-NAR->SMA	0.12	0.53
UGT-PSY->SMA	-0.06	0.31
UGT-MAC->SMA	-0.03	0.74

The study focuses on role of uses and gratification themes and social media addiction concerning personality traits. The findings of study confirm that there is a positive relationship between UGT themes and social media addiction. These results align with the previous studies in which themes of uses and gratification such as entertainment, and social interaction significantly predict social media addiction (Kircaburun et al., 2019). Similarly, findings also enforced the results of (Kuss & Griffiths, 2011) that UGT significantly predicts social media addiction. The constant availability of these gratifications in digital space rushes habitual use, leading to compulsive engagement with platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok (Andreassen et al., 2012). Contrary to expectations, the Dark Triad traits—narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism did not exhibit significant moderating effects on relationship between UGT and SM addiction. This is a surprising finding, given previous research suggesting that individuals with these traits are likely to exhibit problematic social media use (Kircaburun et al., 2018). Our results indicate that personality traits do not impact progression from gratification-seeking to addiction. One explanation could be intrinsic appeal of social media's gratifications (connectivity, entertainment) is strong enough to drive addiction across the different personality types, irrespective of whether users exhibit the traits like narcissism or Machiavellianism.

CONCLUSION

After analyzing the role of personality traits within the entire model, it was observed that the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) has a positive relationship with the social media addiction. This suggests that as UGT increases, individuals are more likely to become addicted to social media usage. However, no significant effects were found when examining impact of negative personality traits, specifically the dark triad, on the relationship between the UGT and social media addiction. Additionally, when assessing the relationship individually with the Narcissism, Psychopathy, and Machiavellianism as the moderators, no effects were observed. This may suggest that mechanisms driving social media addiction are universally related to gratifications sought, rather than being contingent on personality predispositions. Therefore, it is concluded that UGT and social media addiction are not directly influenced by personality traits. Instead, individuals with suitable UGT are prone to addiction regardless of their personality traits. Given limitations of a smaller sample size and insufficient evidence, the hypothesis cannot be supported now. Therefore, it is suggested that future studies focus on expanding the sample size and diversifying the study population to

include various age groups, socioeconomic backgrounds, and class groups. Therefore, by addressing these factors, future research can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship under investigation.

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