

### 3.1: How do we Measure Variables in Psychology?

To students who are just getting started in psychological research, the challenge of measuring such variables might seem insurmountable. Is it really possible to measure things as intangible as self-esteem, mood, or an intention to do something? The answer is a resounding yes, in the next few chapters, we will talk about the nature of the variables that psychologists study and how they can be measured.

#### How dark is your personality?

According to personality theorists, there are several characteristics that reflect the dark side of our personality. A combination of these characteristics is called the dark triad. The dark triad is a relatively new concept in personality psychology. Conceptualised by Paulhus and Williams (2002), the dark triad is comprised of anti-social characteristics of Machiavellianism, Narcissism, and Psychopathy. The following is an example of how we can measure the dark triad:

The dark triad is assessed using a scale called the Dirty Dozen (Jonason & Webster, 2010)<sup>[1]</sup> which has been designed for use with a non-clinical population. Jonason and Webster's measure asks people to rate themselves against these questions (on a scale of 1 to 7):

1. I tend to manipulate others to get my way.
2. I have used deceit or lied to get my way.
3. I have used flattery to get my way.
4. I tend to exploit others towards my own end.
5. I tend to lack remorse.
6. I tend to not be too concerned with morality or the morality of my actions.
7. I tend to be callous or insensitive.
8. I tend to be cynical.
9. I tend to want others to admire me.
10. I tend to want others to pay attention to me.
11. I tend to seek prestige or status.
12. I tend to expect special favours from others.

The total scores range from 12 to 84. What did you get?

1. Jonason, P. K., & Webster, G. D. (2010). The dirty dozen: A concise measure of the dark triad. *Psychological Assessment*, 22(2), 420–432. doi.org/10.1037/a0019265 ↩

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