
The Analysis of Dark Triad Concept in the Song Lyrics of Metallica's "Master of Puppets" and "Sad But True"

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ABSTRACT

The dark triad personality is commonly understood in the field of psychological studies. However, the analysis of the dark triad is still relatively new in the realm of literary studies. This article presents the dark triad in the lyrics of Metallica's songs "Master of Puppets" and "Sad but True". The selection of these two songs is based on the popularity of the song and the choice of words that cause multiple interpretations among Metallica fans. The findings of this research show that there are three traits of the dark triad found in both song lyrics. Machiavellianism represents manipulation; narcissism represents self-admiration; psychopathy represents anti-social and cruelty. This article can hopefully provide in-depth understanding to listeners as the music from previous decades keeps making comebacks.

Article information
(Filled by Editorial
Management)

Received: 23 Oct, 2024

Revised: 24 Oct, 2024

Accepted: 25 Oct, 2024

Keywords: *dark triad; Machiavellianism; narcissism; psychopathy*

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.22146/rubikon.v11i2.100950>

Available at <https://jurnal.ugm.ac.id/rubikon/article/view/100950>

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INTRODUCTION

Metallica has been recognized by many music observers as one of the four biggest thrash metal bands alongside Slayer, Megadeth, and Anthrax. The Big Four, as these

four bands are called, are also known as the pioneers of thrash metal music. James Hetfield, Metallica's vocalist, said that people should have the right to scream as loudly and freely as possible. Metallica itself was

formed in 1981 in Los Angeles, California by drummer Lars Ulrich (Vogue, 2023). Thrash metal music is another variation of heavy metal music. Weinstein (2000, p. 48) philosophically defines thrash metal as a criticism and expression of dislike for pop music that tends to be more "soft" and "polite". The hallmark of thrash metal lies in the fast tempo with guttural vocals and fast and shrill guitar solo techniques or what is known as shredding techniques.

Of the many songs that Metallica released, "Master of Puppets" in 1986 and "Sad but True" in 1993 are two of the most popular songs. Both have a deep message and meaning in the lyrics of both songs. "Master of Puppets" is claimed by many fans as a form of expression or depiction of how dark drug addiction is. Meanwhile, "Sad but True" describes how a person's past also determines his fate in the future. However, they certainly leave room for other interpretations that have different implications.

The dark impression in "Master of Puppets" and "Sad but True" is undeniable due to the harsh and brutal lyrical choices. This analysis derives the influence of the two songs among fans and society in

general. Based on the influence of the lyrics of the two songs, the article aims to look at other perspectives from a psychoanalytic point of view, especially the concept of dark triad personality that exists in the two songs.

The concept of the dark triad has not been touched upon many by literary critics, especially those who study psychoanalysis. The dark triad, as expressed by Lyons (Lyons, 2019), is a character who is antagonistic, self-centered, and exploitative. Someone with such traits can be observed on a day-to-day basis. Among young Indonesians, the term "toxic relationship" often appears in daily conversations or on social media. Toxic relationships have the same characteristics as the dark triad. Therefore, this article will provide an in-depth understanding of the darkest side of the "evil nature" of a person.

According to O'Boyle et.al. (Boyle, Forsyth, Banks, & McDaniel, 2012), the term 'dark triad' refers to Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy. All of them have a level of ugliness that affects a person's behaviors. Each characteristic of the dark triad has its specific characteristics but are interrelated

A person with Machiavellianism tends to manipulate others. Machiavellianism is characterized as manipulative and cynical towards others and seeks to take advantage even if it violates norms and rules (Lyons, 2019). Narcissism, on the other hand, refers to an exaggerated view of oneself. In addition, a person with this character tends to be unwilling to accept criticism and crazy for praise from others. The third trait is psychopathy, which refers to individuals who are unable to show empathy towards others (Rizal & Handayani, 2021). When someone with this character commits an evil and cruel act, they will show no remorse.

Furthermore, this article explores the dark triad that appears in the interpretation of the lyrics of "Master of Puppets" and "Sad but True". The discussion will be divided into three segments, namely Machiavellianism, Narcissism, and Psychopathy. These three parts of the dark side triad have often been discussed by a number of researchers, especially within the scope of psychological studies (Muris, Merckelbach, Otgaar, & Meijer, 2017). Despite the fact that the dark triad personality often appears in a number of characters in many literary

works. However, so far, almost no one has brought the concept of the dark triad into literary studies (Sumner, Byers, Boochever, & Park, 2012). Therefore, this article is the first to focus on song lyrics as the object of research.

This research has two objectives to be elaborated: (1) How do the lyrics of "Master of Puppets" and "Sad but True" represent the characteristics of the dark triad? and (2) How is the meaning of the lyrics related to the dark triad?. The purpose of this research is to see the representation of dark triad characteristics. In addition to classification, how dark triads are displayed in song lyrics will also be presented.

METHODOLOGY

The article displays literary research conducted on the object of song lyrics in Metallica's "Master of Puppets" and "Sad but True". All stages of research are carried out remotely by relying on access to literacy from the internet and also the institution's library. Therefore, it is expected that there will be no obstacles for researchers to conduct research in relation to access to information.

In collecting and processing data, this research uses

descriptive qualitative methods. This method is intended to examine literary elements without any experimental engineering by researchers. The application of this method is used to explain the meaning of data supported by a number of empirical factual evidence (Ahmadi & Kartiwi, 2020). Therefore, it is expected that this research will be able to produce a comprehensive explanation in accordance with the researcher's interpretation.

In the realm of literary studies, psychoanalytic theory is a commonly used theory, in both Freudian and Lacanian schools. The concept of psychoanalytic theory is related to human mental function and development (Puspitasari, 2016). This then underlies the motives of every human action. Psychoanalysis applies to literary studies and then triggers the emergence of many literary studies that use psychology as a theoretical basis.

According to Freud (Ardiansyah, Sarinah, Susilawati, & Juanda, 2022), the consciousness that exists in a person is a small part of his overall mental life. On the one hand, the unconscious is a much bigger part. With the premise that the human subconscious plays an active

role in determining a person's character, attitude and actions, this psychological condition encourages a variety of motives. The actions that emerge can be either polite, courteous and friendly or rude, cruel and brutal. Human nature can go so far that it even leads to the dark side. This dark side of human character in the realm of psychology is known as the dark triad personality.

In qualitative research, the data analyzed are written language elements in the form of words, phrases sentences and paragraphs (Sugiyono, 2017). In addition, oral language elements are also analyzed, which are then transcribed. Based on the source, the data in the research can be divided into primary and secondary data. The primary data used are the lyrics of the songs "Master of Puppets" and "Sad but True" by Metallica. Meanwhile, secondary data are theories and arguments from reference books, journal articles and other publications related to the study of psychoanalysis and the theory of dark triad personality. The data are collected using the listen-read-record technique. Primary data collection begins with reading primary and secondary data sources. The researchers then analyze the meaning and classification of the dark

triad personality in the song lyrics.

After collecting the data, they are then analyzed using content analysis, which is a systematic technique to parse the detailed content of the data and interpret it (Adhitya, et al., 2022, p. 263). To ensure the validity and reliability of the research instruments, the research team applied the triangulation method (Bhandari, 2023). In the research, data and theoretical triangulation are applied.

DISCUSSION

A Machiavellian is a person who uses others for their benefit (Bereczkei, 2018). The term Machiavellian is named after a Renaissance writer, Nicolo Machiavelli. He wrote a book called *The Prince*, which is about how a leader perpetuates his position. Machiavellian beliefs argue that a leader must maintain ethics but on the one hand, should not hesitate to be cunning and deceptive to maintain his or her power. Therefore, the concept of Machiavellianism is based on the ideas put forward by Machiavelli. Furthermore, there are five main characteristics of Machiavellianism, namely manipulation, immorality, cynicism, emotional coldness,

and lack of empathy (Bereczkei, 2018). Therefore, the categorization and analysis of song lyrics are based on these five main characteristics of Machiavellianism (Paulhus & William, 2002).

Someone with a narcissistic personality admires themselves excessively, has fantasies of control over others and a high imagination of success (Rizal & Handayani, 2021). He or she also tends to look down on others so that they are always better than others. People with narcissism also dislike negative responses from others or opinions that point out their shortcomings.

The last one is psychopathy. Of the three dark triad traits, psychopathy is known for its more aggressive and evil character traits. Psychopathic characters tend not to care about their surroundings which leads to violent criminal things (Rizal & Handayani, 2021). People with this character will not show remorse for their evil deeds to others. These three dark triad traits are all found in the lyrics of "Master of Puppets" and "Sad but True", as shown below.

Table 1. The Classification of Dark Triad Traits

N	Dark Triad	"Master of Puppets"	"Sad but True"
1	Machiavellianism	I'm your source of self-destruction Leading on your death's construction Taste me, you will see More is all you need Master of puppets, I'm pulling your strings Now I rule you too	I'm your eyes when you must steal You (you), you're my mask You're my cover, my shelter Do (do), do my work Do my dirty work, scapegoat I'm your truth, telling lies Hey (hey), I'm your life I'm the one who takes you there I'm the one who cares I'm your only true friend now
2	Narcissism	Come crawling faster Obey your master Just call my name, 'cause I'll hear you scream	

N	Dark Triad	"Master of Puppets"	Meaning
3	Psychopathy	How I'm killing you Twisting your mind and smashing your dreams I will help you die	I'm your dream, make you real Hate (hate), I'm your hate And I no longer care

Machiavellianism and narcissism traits appear most dominantly in the lyrics. Meanwhile, psychopathy traits appear as the least. We can conclude that the lyrics in both songs represent the traits of the dark triad. The following is the meaning of the lyrics of Master of Puppets and Sad but True related to the dark triad traits.

Table 2. The Meaning Interpretation of Dark Triad Traits in "Master of Puppets"

N	Dark Triad	"Master of Puppets"	Meaning
1	Machiavellianism	I'm your source of self-destruction Leading on your death's construction	A takes control of B's life A is the end of B's life

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			Table 3. The meaning interpretation of Dark Triad Characteristics in "Sad but True"				
			No	Dark Triad	"Sad But True"	Meaning	
2	Narcissism	Taste me, you will see	A				
		More is all you need	A manipulates B				
		Master of puppets, I'm pulling your strings	A puts the doctrine to B	1	Machiavellianism	I'm your eyes when you must steal	A manipulates B
		Now I rule you too	A is the master of B			You (you), you're my mask	A makes B his/her disguise
		Come crawling faster	A owns B			You're my cover, my shelter	A makes B his/her shield
		Obey your master	A orders B			Do (do), do my work	A asks/orders B to do his/her job (showing superiority)
		Just call my name, 'cause I'll hear your scream	A shows the power of B			Do my dirty work, scapegoat	A orders B to do his/her nasty job and blames B
		How I'm killing you	A acts as the savior for B			I'm your truth, telling lies	A's utterance is used as the truth when B lies.
		Twisting your mind and smashing your dreams	A destroys B's mind and dream	2	Narcissism	Hey (hey), I'm your life	A is the source of life for B
		I will help you die	A accompanies B until the death			I'm the one who takes you there	B is indebted to A for the rest of life
				I'm the one who cares	A show to B that he/she is the only person		

		that cares for B.
	I'm your only true friend now	A is the one and only true companion for B
	I'm your dream, make you real	A is the destiny and finish line for B
3	Psychopathy	
	Hate (hate), I'm your hate	A is the single source of B's hatred
	And I no longer care	A does not care/pay attention to B anymore

someone who tends to manipulate and control others. Meanwhile, "Sad but True" underscores the confusing and misleading feeling of attachment. The lyrics reflect narcissistic tendencies with the depiction of the self as a source of suffering, while still maintaining an attractiveness that affects others. Also, elements of Machiavellianism are seen in the lyrical message that describes complex and strategic relationships, emphasizing the manipulation of emotions and perceptions. People with Machiavellianism tend to lack affection in interpersonal relationships. Both songs highlight the dark aspects of humans associated with the Dark Triad, reflecting complex and often detrimental psychological characteristics. Metallica cleverly incorporates these elements into their lyrics, creating a message that questions manipulation, attachment, and the dark side of humanity.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of Metallica's "Master of Puppets" and "Sad but True" shows a connection with the concept of the Dark Triad, which includes three main characteristics: narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism. The three traits of the dark triad represent manipulative nature, superiority and antipathy. Both songs thematically explore the dark side of humanity, feelings of manipulation, and power that can control and corrupt. In "Master of Puppets," the lyrics describe a person as a "puppet master" who controls the lives of others, reflecting elements of psychopathy with control and manipulation. The song refers to the power relationships and chaos that can result from

COMPETING INTEREST STATEMENT

Herewith the author declares that this article is totally free from any conflict of interest regarding the assessment, review and revision, and publication process in general.

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