

# Can Bright Personality Traits when Overplayed become Dark?

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## ARTICLE DETAILS

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## ABSTRACT

The scope of present work deals with personality traits in a way which differentiates them on basis of social desirability. The two forms of personality traits are the bright and the dark personality traits. The need to differentiate arises because of the inclination towards the bright traits as in the long run under work related environment the dark traits also have a major role to play. The paper also encompasses the fact that the bright personality traits when displayed in excess also become dark. There are studies where researchers have concluded that in contrast to bright personality traits the dark personality traits seem to be more useful as far as work related success is considered. All such cases have been extensively reviewed in the literature review section and in the conclusion it is stated that overdoing the bright traits also categorizes in the dark category as there is a fine line of difference between bright and dark personality when both of them are put to practice.

## 1. Introduction

Now days it is quite popular to differentiate personality traits in to two broad categories as dark and bright. There is ample of research which supports the implications of both bright and dark personality traits into various areas like academic performance and image management as well. The theme of this work poses a challenge on the ever existing rule of bright personality traits being much preferable in comparison to the dark personality traits. Scope of this work is limited to explore whether there is a downside to the bright traits as well.

In other words it is to be explored that when the bright personality traits are overdone in any situation does they become dark in itself. This analysis is done in order to increase the degree of understanding about the complex nature of personality which comprises of both bright and dark traits. There are situations which one encounters in both life and work where the dark personality traits seem more preferable to be demonstrated than bright personality traits.

There are researches which conclude that there is a fine line of difference between bright and dark personality traits when either of them is displayed in excess. There are set of questionnaires based on popular models to administer both bright and dark personality traits among people through self assessment.

## 2. Review of Literature

Popular conventions and all the rule of thumbs which have worked well in the past are also backed up by ample of research work done by people coming from different domains. To substantiate this section will elaborate on such studies which will further help in strengthening towards the understanding of a very complex element, personality and traits.

**Benson & Campbell** in the year (2007) conducted a study to determine the relationship between dark personality traits and the leadership performances of individuals. For this purpose two independent samples were used, one with 1306

respondents and the second with 290 respondents. The researchers found nonlinear relationship among the dark personality traits and leadership performances of the respondents where their dark personality traits were measured using Global Personality inventory. While in case of study two where the personality traits were measured using Hogan Development survey there was nonlinear relationship among dark personality traits and the leadership performances of the respondents.

**Perales et.al (2009)** conducted their study on 155 respondents for trait impulsivity at both the extreme ends. In the findings it was mentioned that women possessing high trait-impulsivity were seen to perform greater number of commission errors in case of tasks which involved go/no-go events in comparison to women who scored low on trait impulsivity.

**Ma & Zi (2011)** conducted a qualitative based on personality traits of people in order to identify their traits within special categories labeled as negative and positive perfectionist. Six people in all out of which four were negative and two were non negative perfectionist were interviewed in a structured manner. The results showed that both categories corresponded to the type of feelings in which they were classified. In other words negative perfectionists were found to have negative feelings while non negative perfectionists had positive feelings.

**Furnham, Trickey & Hyde (2012)** claimed on basis of their work that dark personality traits have been associated with both success and failure of people at workplaces. Some of the selected personality traits were found to be associated with success in a particular form of jobs while some other were lined to different type of jobs. This segregation was based on the results obtained from a survey which was conducted upon 5000 adults of British origin making use of Hogan Development Survey (HDS), and the Hogan Personality Inventory (HPI). In the results it was concluded that possessing borderline and

paranoid personality led to workplace failure a maximum number of times.

According to **Furnham, Crump & Ritchie (2013)** performed their studies to establish a relationship between rate of promotion and certain personality traits which were measured making use of NEO-PI-R and HDS. In their work they concluded by performing correlation analysis that lower levels of emotional stability were seen associated with promotion in a negative manner. Extraversion, conscientiousness, and greater levels of intelligence had a positive association with promotion in the workplace environment.

**Scheepers, Lombarts, Van Aken, Heineman & Arah (2014)** claimed that the common practice of resident doctors being trained by attending physicians is a common practice. To determine the extent to which attending physician is capable of providing training to the residents, the attending physicians are examined of their teaching performance. There are research based evidences which clearly indicate towards the linkage between personality traits and teaching performances. Effect of personality traits on the teaching performances of attending physicians was examined and it was concluded that extrovert attending physicians were found to be better at both teaching and supervision.

According to **Kaiser, LeBreton & Hogan (2015)**, the Bright personality traits shown in five factor models also have counterproductive results when deeply associated with leader behaviors subject to situation. These researchers predicated that there is a relationship between levels of emotional stability and behaviors of leaders. This was based on a sample of 320 American managers and executives who were rated by 4, 906 coworkers in order to determine the effect of emotional stability on leader behavior.

According to **Harms & Spain (2015)** the work related performances of individuals are only not determined by the bright personality traits but are also a result of dark personality traits. Their work was not only confined to the most popular classifications of dark personality traits namely the Dark Triad and the DSM-IV Axis 2. The researcher considered the dark traits beyond these models in the name of feelings of entitlement, self-enhancement and perfectionism.

**Ma'amor, Yunus, Hashim, & Haque in the year (2016)** stated that to retain employees in the organization and make them work to accomplish organizational objectives, leaders plays an important role. The findings of this study revealed that those leaders who well with their employees are much capable to retain people and get them to work with higher rates of efficiency.

**Zuo et.al (2016)** assumed that the traits of dark triad have a weak connection with any person's morality. In contrast the contemporary studies showcased a stronger connection of narcissism with morality rather than other two traits of the dark triad namely machiavellianism and psychopathy. This work was based on the data derived from 2828 Chinese respondents in order to determine relationship between the

dark triad traits and morality to further see its impact on pro-social behavior. In the results it was seen that narcissism was positively linked to morality but not machiavellianism or psychopathy.

**Palaiou, Zarola and Furnham (2016)** performed a study to determine the relationship between both negative and positive organizational attitudes with the dark traits of the personality. 451 respondents were subjected to Hogan development survey in order to determine their dark traits of personality. The results showed that there was positive association between both positive and negative organizational attitudes with dark personality traits namely Excitable, Sceptical and Bold. The other dark personality traits like Leisurely and Cautious were associated with positive and negative organizational attitudes respectively.

From all the work cited above and by carrying out an extensive review of literature available in the domain of dark personality traits helps in gaining deeper insights in the role of dark personality traits determining the levels of performances of individuals in the work related environment.

### 3. Bright and Dark Traits of Personality: What makes them different?

Both the dark and bright personality traits are like two sides of the same coin. Each one of us has essentially both of them in us which allows letting us become socially desirable or undesirable at the same time. There are various behavioral scientists that have classified these bright and dark traits of personality and have also proposed instruments to measure each one of them. This scoring on the instruments allows an individual to have a clear demarcation between what type of personality traits are socially desirable and undesirable.

The big five model which is also termed as the OCEAN model or the Five Factor Model is the most popular model for determining the bright personality traits as it allows determining the levels of Agreeableness, Extroversion, Emotional Stability, Conscientiousness and Openness to experience. The other popular scales making use of which the bright personality traits can be determined are Hogan Personality inventory and NEO-PI-R.

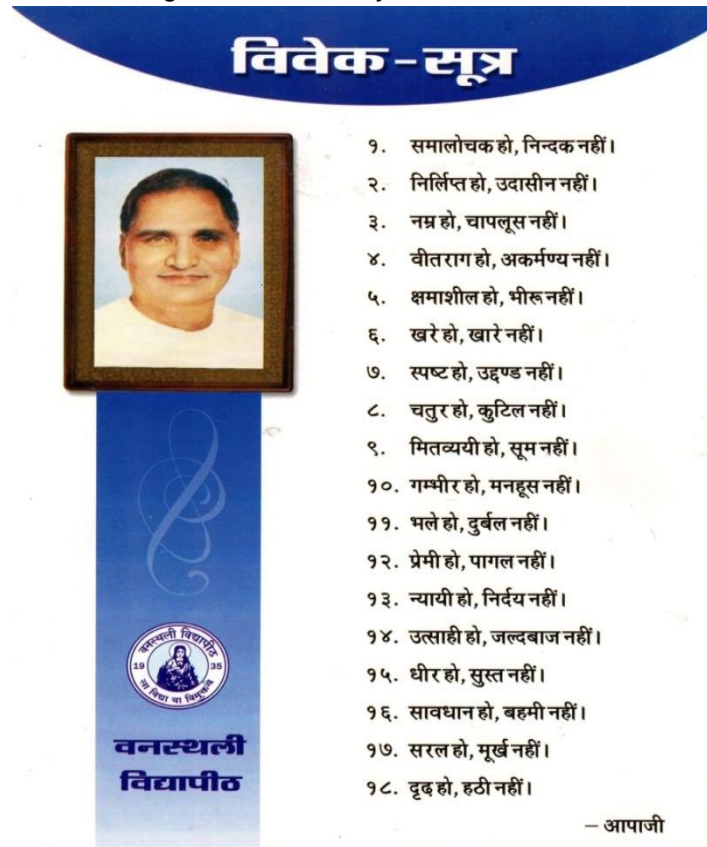
In the similar fashion the popular inventories making use of which the dark personality traits are measured in individuals are DSM-IV Axis 2, Hogan development Survey and the Dirty Dozen scale which is based on the Dark Triad traits. The only difference between these personality traits which is evidently seen at the societal perspective is their degree of desirability. This acceptance of the traits which should be possessed in the individuals and which should not be possessed by them brings about the difference between Bright and Dark personality traits.

It is a notion in minds of people that if some person's personality reflects the bright personality traits than there are very less chances of having any trouble from their end. While Dark personality traits have the exactly opposite response as far as the social perception is concerned. There are researches which show that even bright personality traits can cause trouble. The founder of Banasthali Vidyapith (India's

Largest Fully Residential University for Women) Pandit Hiralal Shastri Ji demonstrated his understanding of the bright and

dark personality traits in form of Vivek Sutra's shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Vivek Sutra by Pandit Hiralal Shastri Ji



There are many models in the western world which embark upon this differentiation between bright and dark personality traits but certainly the differentiation so made by Pandit Hiralal Shastri Ji is quite appropriate as far as its implications are visualized in the arena of socially desirable personalities and non desirable personalities. This demarcation clearly indicates that when the bright personality traits are over performed in any situation they lose its impact and become somewhat undesirable that is nothing but dark personality traits.

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

The orientation of people towards personality of individuals can be clearly defined with the levels of personalities being preferred socially. In the first interaction each one of us looks and emphasizes on the presence of

bright personality traits and no importance is given to the dark personality traits that they are present or not. This should not be the case and the absence of dark personality traits should also be given preference during the first interactions.

While the scope of this work is to highlight the fact that when the bright personality traits which when re present in individuals and over displayed under various situations, they seem to do bad for the individual rather than any good. For this reference the work by Adrian Furnham, University College of London is quite illustrative. The researcher dealt with the extreme vibrancy of bright personalities and compared them against the subclinical level of histrionic personality disorders. In the conclusion the researcher seconds the opinion mentioned by Adrian Furnham that collection of qualities which are over bright seems to be problematic for individuals.

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