

The Light vs. Dark Triad and compassion for others: The mediating role of inner harmony among teachers

Dariusz Krok, Justyna Tkaczyk

Abstract

Aim of the study: Childcare can be categorized as a form of compassionate work, and compassion plays a crucial role in fostering positive relationships between teachers and children. This study aimed at understanding the nature of relationships between the Light and Dark Triads and compassion for others within a mediational context of inner harmony among teachers.

Materials and methods: The study was conducted on a group of 261 teachers (87% women and 13% men) working in primary schools (62%), secondary schools (25%), preschools (12%), and universities (1%). Participants completed printed or online questionnaires. The measures consisted of the Light Triad Scale, the Dark Triad Scale, the Compassion Scale for Others, and the Inner Harmony Scale.

Results: The study confirmed all the four hypotheses. The most significant finding revealed that inner harmony mediated the relationship between all the dimensions of both the Light and Dark Triads with compassion for others. The research also demonstrated direct associations between the dimensions of the Light and Dark Triads with compassion for others and inner harmony.

Discussion: Higher levels of the Light Triad are related to increased motivation to establish stable and cooperative interpersonal connections. In addition, inner harmony turns out to be a key aspect of happiness, while experiencing positive emotions by an individual leads to more satisfying, empathy-based, and compassionate relationships with others.

Conclusion: The study indicated that compassion for others is a crucial attribute, particularly in the role of a teacher, which justifies the need for further development of research and concepts within this research group.

the Light Triad; the Dark Triad; compassion for others; inner harmony

INTRODUCTION

The importance of the Light Triad and Dark Triad in teachers' compassion for others

Compassion, typically described as a sensitivity towards one's own and others' suffering, with

a commitment to alleviating and preventing it, is an inherent pro-social drive that evolved within the mammalian caring system [1]. Compassion brings about advantages for mental health, emotion regulation, and social relationships. In the school year 2022/2023, there were 512.1 thousand teachers employed in all educational institutions, which constitutes 3.38% of the working population and 1.36% of the total population in Poland [2]. The unique characteristics of teachers' work, including the object, process, na-

Dariusz Krok, Justyna Tkaczyk: Institute of Psychology, University of Opole, Poland

Correspondence address: dkrok@uni.opole.pl

ture, and purpose, necessitate that they actively invest a significant amount of emotion, care, and patience in their interactions with students. Empathy stands as a fundamental professional skill among teachers [3]. Educators who possess a high level of empathy also display greater enthusiasm towards their profession, resulting in increased attentiveness, wisdom, passion, and the delivery of high-quality instruction to their students. The ability to fulfil these responsibilities lies within each individual teacher, but this capacity may gradually deplete when teachers face excessive workloads, leaving their compassion unsatisfied [4]. Demonstrating empathy is a regular and integral aspect of both teachers' training and teaching practices.

The Light and the Dark Triads constitute a set of personality traits in an individual. Kaufman et al. introduced an alternative concept to the Dark Triad known as the Light Triad [5]. Their objective was to juxtapose the darker aspects of personality with more positive traits, thus developing a measurement that encompasses positive personality characteristics in contrast to the negative traits of the Dark Triad. In connection with Kaufman's work, it was found that there is a moderate negative correlation between the Light Triad and the Dark Triad ($r = -0.48, p < 0.01$), indicating that the Light Triad cannot be simply considered as the opposite of the Dark Triad [6]. The ultimate version of the Dark Triad comprises three factors: (1) faith in humanity – indicating our inclination to have faith in the inherent goodness of people, (2) humanism – representing the recognition of the value and dignity of each individual as a unique person, and (3) kantianism – involving the act of treating people as ends in themselves and refraining from using them as mere instruments.

The Light Triad reflects a caring and benevolent orientation towards others, which is evident in everyday behavior. Upon examining the conceptual meaning of the three factors, it becomes apparent that these subscales are deeply rooted in positive psychology, reflecting an overall optimistic view of humans [7,8]. Faith in humanity, humanism, and kantianism can be seen as factors that promote positivity by highlighting human strengths and the inclination to shift towards positive behaviors. These factors em-

phasize the belief that people can ethically and constructively relate to others. The Light Triad factors also demonstrate the human capacity to resist objectionable and egoistic thoughts and desires, thereby reducing the tendency to engage in selfish, volatile, and ill-disposed behaviors to a significant extent [9].

The Light Triad emphasizes qualities such as sympathy, compassion, and humanity, which stand in contrast to the traits associated with the Dark Triad, which predicts aggressive behaviors, violence, and low empathy [5]. Moreover, the Light Triad personality tends to foster healthier social relationships and diminish interpersonal issues. Sympathy is defined as the cognitive ability to comprehend the emotions of others [10]. Compassion, on the other hand, involves engaging with the suffering of others, being aware of their pain, and not avoiding it. Typically, compassion is expressed through kindness towards others, though Buddhist psychology emphasizes that being compassionate towards oneself is even more crucial than showing compassion towards others [11].

The Dark Triad comprises three interconnected personality traits: machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy [12]. Those with elevated the Dark Triad composite scores possess artificially inflated self-perceptions (narcissism) and employ manipulation to attain their objectives (machiavellianism), showing limited empathy or remorse (psychopathy). Literature review suggests that individuals with elevated the Dark Triad personality traits tend to display low positive emotionality/affect, engage in antisocial behavior, exhibit distrust of others, and may be involved in substance abuse [13]. Moreover, people with the Dark Triad personality traits may demonstrate self-centeredness, dishonesty, impulsivity, and maintain callous attitudes towards others. Other researchers argue that individuals with high levels of the Dark Triad personality traits also commonly exhibit behaviors such as exploitation, manipulateness, a sense of grandiosity, and self-importance [14], as well as social malevolence, emotional coldness, duplicity, and aggressiveness. As a result, individuals with the Dark Triad personality traits seem to have low or even absent levels of cooperation, altruism, inclusion, compassion, and other prosocial skills [11].

The role of inner harmony in work-life balance

Harmony, the most common subcategory found in psychological definitions of happiness, encompasses elements such as inner peace, inner balance, contentment, and psychophysical well-being. The idea of happiness as inner harmony has recently received empirical validation. For instance, Delle Fave et al. conducted a cross-cultural study to assess how people define happiness [15]. Their findings revealed that inner harmony and relational connectedness were the most frequently cited aspects when people describe happiness. The notion of mature happiness challenges conventional approaches to well-being and may be more suitable for individuals undergoing hardship, as it underscores the ability to uphold well-being in spite of life's negative aspects. Consequently, mature happiness underscores the significance of enduring and embracing uncertainty and suffering to remain composed during difficult times. In addition to this emphasis on resilience, mature happiness is also rooted in utilizing one's internal strengths rather than relying solely on external resources, and it prioritizes the pursuit of tranquility over excitement, so it seems to play an important role in psychological aspects of human beings [16].

Fredrickson proposes that frequent instances of positive feelings triggered by personal happiness and compassion while working will have an impact on the professional outcomes of teachers [17]. As per this theory, encountering positive emotions during work contributes to expanding the mental perspectives of workers, empowering them to develop their individual reservoirs through heightened sensitivity and favorable attitudes towards their workplace [18]. In the context of education, experiencing positive emotions can prompt early childhood educators to establish favorable emotional connections with their work environment, gradually aiding them in adopting a more positive outlook and nurturing their emotional vitality and dedication to the organization [17]. Employees who experience greater happiness are more inclined to participate in selfless and collaborative behaviors, thereby enriching the overall ambiance and comprehensive efficiency within the workplace [19,20]. Furthermore, they develop

enhanced skills in effectively managing workloads and stress, leading to improved decision-making in work-related matters [21,22]. The profession of a teacher is fulfilling but demanding. Teachers are susceptible to occupational burnout due to long hours of teaching and a heavy workload [23]. Maintaining inner harmony appears to be an extremely important aspect in the professional life of teachers, given the significant demands faced by this professional group.

The present study

The aim of this study is to explore the relationship of the Light and Dark Triad with compassion for others, and check whether inner harmony mediates these relationships (Figure 1). Based on the theoretical assumptions and previous empirical studies, four hypotheses were proposed: (H1) A higher level of the Light Triad would be related to higher compassion for others, (H2) A higher level of the Dark Triad would be related to lower compassion for others, (H3) Inner harmony would mediate the relationship of the Light Triad with compassion for others, and (H4) Inner harmony would mediate the relationship of the Dark Triad with compassion for others.

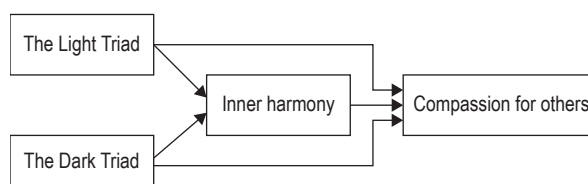


Figure 1. The relationships between the Light vs. Dark Triad and compassion for others among teachers: the mediating perspective of inner harmony.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Participants

The research comprised a cohort of 261 teachers whose ages ranged from 22 to 70 years. On average, they were 45.2 years old (SD = 10.36). The group exhibited diversity in terms of age, gender, years of professional experience, and

workplace. Notably, the majority of the participants were female (87%), while males made up the remaining 13%. This significant predominance of women is related to the nature of the teaching profession in Poland, which has a overrepresentation of women. The duration of work experience ranged from 1 to 50 years, with an average of 20.3 years ($SD = 11.71$). The teachers were employed in various educational institutions: primary schools (62%), secondary schools (i.e. vocational schools, high schools, technical schools, 25%), preschools (12%), and universities (i.e. state universities, technological universities, 1%).

Procedure

Participants were selected from various workplaces to obtain a representative sample of teachers. The survey was conducted in the southern regions of Poland, including urban and rural areas. In selecting schools, we also tried to diversify the regions in terms of economic and social factors. They received information about the study's purpose and guidelines, and were requested to complete either an online or printed version of the questionnaire. The questionnaire provided to participants comprised instructions, a metric, the Light Triad Scale, the Dark Triad Scale, the Compassion Scale for Others, and the Inner Harmony Scale. Before starting a survey, participants were informed about the study's anonymity and the importance of completing the questionnaires independently with honesty and accuracy. The metric collected information on their age, gender, years of work experience, and workplace. A research assistant was available if any additional inquiries occurred during the process.

Measures

To measure our variables the following tools were used: the Light Triad Scale [5], the Dark Triad Scale [6], the Inner Harmony Scale [24], and the Compassion Scale for Others [25].

The Light Triad Scale [5] is a 12-item questionnaire created by Kaufman et al. with the purpose of measuring three dimensions: faith in humani-

ty („I have a tendency to see the best in people”; „I believe people are mostly good”), humanism („I tend to treat others as valuable”; „I enjoy listening to people from all walks of life”), and kantianism („I feel uncomfortable overtly manipulating people to achieve my goals”; „I value authenticity even if it may harm my reputation”). These dimensions assess a compassionate and altruistic attitude towards others. Respondents rate each item on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The scale was translated into Polish by Gerymski and Krok [9]. The Cronbach's coefficients for the current study were .81 (faith in humanity), .71 (humanism), and .65 (kantianism).

The Dark Triad Scale was created to measure psychopathy, narcissism, and machiavellianism as personality traits and their sum composing the Dark Triad [6]. The scale was adopted into Polish by Czarna et al. [26]. The questionnaire consists of 12 items, four for each component of the Dark Triad. Respondents provide answers to the statements using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Sample statements in the scale include: “I usually do not feel guilty,” “I typically manipulate others to get what I want”, “I want people to admire me” and “I use flattery to get what I want”. The Cronbach's coefficients for the current study were 0.77 (psychopathy), 0.81 (narcissism), and 0.85 (machiavellianism).

The Inner Harmony Scale is part of The Self-description Questionnaire [24]. Due to the aim of our study this subscale was used to specifically assess a mental state of emotional stability, balance, and acceptance of one's life in general. The subscale comprises 7 items which are rated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (definitely not) to 5 (definitely yes). The sample items are: “Thinking about my life, I feel peace and joy” or “I have the feeling that I am part of this world”. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the present study was 0.85.

The Compassion Scale for Others was created by Pommier et al. [25] and adapted into Polish by Fopka-Kowalczyk et al. [27]. The scale possesses good psychometric properties and serves to assess compassion for others and its components, both in clinical and research settings. The scale consists of 16 statements, to which participants respond using a 5-point Lik-

ert scale, ranging from 0 (almost never) to 5 (almost always). The scale comprises four subscales: kindness, common humanity, mindfulness, and indifference. The sample items include: „I listen attentively when others tell me about their problems“, „I am not very concerned about the worries of others“, „I genuinely feel compassion for people who are unhappy.“ and „I try to avoid people who are suffering greatly“. The Cronbach’s coefficients for the current study were 0.81 (kindness), 0.77 (common humanity), 0.72 (mindfulness), 0.78 (indifference), and 0.78 (total score).

Data analysis

First, taking into account the values of previous results, we performed a priori power analysis G* to assess a sufficient sample size. In accordance with recommendations formulated by Faul et al. [28] we set the following parameters: 80% power (1-β); α = 0.05; test family: F tests; statistical test: Linear multiple regression: Fixed model, R² deviation from zero. A number of 261 participants was indicated as sufficient to obtain statistically significant results in our study. Next, to verify the applicability of mediation analysis, we used variance inflation factors (VIF) to detect collinearity or multicollinearity among the predicting variables [29]. The high value of VIF (i.e. greater than 5 or even sometimes 2.5) indicates a more problematic amount of collinearity between predictors. In this study, the maximum value of VIF was 2.13, which allows us to assume no multicollinearity among the explanatory variables.

Next, we used a two-tail correlation test to assess associations among all the variables. Finally, mediation analysis (Model 4) was applied to test direct and indirect effects between the variables along with the bootstrapping procedure (10 000 samples; 95% confidence intervals) [30]. To prevent any potential missing data, the method of case-wise mean substitution, which relies on imputing average scores from the corresponding subscale, was applied. All statistical analyses were conducted by using the software SPSS 28 with PROCESS macro v4.2.

RESULTS

Correlational analysis

At the beginning of our statistical analysis, descriptive statistics for all the variables were provided. Then, initial correlations were calculated to assess associations among the variables (Table 1).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and correlations among the Light and Dark Triads, inner harmony, and compassion for others among teachers.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Faith in humanity	–										
Humanism	0.40***	–									
Kantianism	0.35***	0.35***	–								
Narcissism	-0.15*	-0.09	-0.30***	–							
Psychopathy	-0.34***	-0.18**	-0.34***	0.45***	–						
Machiavellianism	-0.19**	-0.16*	-0.38***	0.59***	0.62***	–					
Inner harmony	0.37***	0.32***	0.23***	-0.14*	-0.20**	-0.23***	–				
Kindness	0.38***	0.28***	0.27***	-0.08	-0.29***	-0.21***	0.31***	–			
Common Humanity	0.30***	0.20**	0.18**	-0.07	-0.11	-0.16*	0.34***	0.67***	–		
Mindfulness	0.27***	0.28***	0.22***	-0.03	-0.10	-0.17*	0.29***	0.79***	0.72***	–	
Indifference	-0.12*	-0.04	-0.20**	0.20**	0.29***	0.26***	-0.01	-0.29***	-0.20**	-0.23***	–
Compassion for others – Total score	0.33***	0.28**	0.19**	-0.01	-0.11	-0.12*	0.36***	0.85***	0.86***	0.83***	0.02

M	3.71	3.95	4.29	2.18	1.58	1.52	3.58	4.18	4.00	4.25	2.44
SD	0.66	0.57	0.53	0.89	0.61	0.61	0.78	0.67	0.68	0.65	0.51

*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

The correlational results showed that the three dimensions of the Light Triad: faith in humanity, humanism, and kantianism, were negatively associated with two dimensions of the Dark Triad: psychopathy and machiavellianism. Additionally, faith in humanity and kantianism, but not humanism, were negatively associated with narcissism. Faith in humanity, humanism, and kantianism were positively related to inner harmony, as well as three dimensions of compassion for others: kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness, along with its total score. In contrast, faith in humanity and kantianism were negatively related to indifference. Moreover, narcissism, psychopathy, and machiavellianism were negatively associated with inner harmony. Narcissism was also positively associated with indifference. Psychopathy was negatively associated with kindness and positively associated with indifference. Machiavellianism was negatively associated with kindness, common humanity, mindfulness, and the total score

of compassion, and positively associated with indifference.

Mediational analysis

In the next step of statistical analysis, we decided to examine whether inner harmony could mediate the relationship of the Light and Dark Triad with compassion for others. A mediation model with one mediator (Model 4) recommended by Hayes [30] was applied along with the bootstrapping procedure (sample = 10 000; 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals). Independent variables were the dimensions of the Light Triad: faith in humanity, humanism, and kantianism and the dimensions of the Dark Triad: narcissism, psychopathy, and machiavellianism. The mediator was inner harmony. The total score of compassion for others was entered as dependent variable. The mediating effects are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Indirect and total effects for inner harmony in the relationship of the Light and Dark Triad with compassion for others (standardized coefficients).

Indirect effects	Effect	SE	LLCI	ULCI
Faith in humanity – Inner harmony – Compassion for others	0.11	0.03	0.05	0.18
Humanism – Inner harmony – Compassion for others	0.10	0.03	0.05	0.17
Kantianism – Inner harmony – Compassion for others	0.08	0.03	0.02	0.14
Narcissism – Inner harmony – Compassion for others	-0.05	0.02	-0.10	-0.01
Psychopathy – Inner harmony – Compassion for others	-0.07	0.03	-0.13	-0.03
Machiavellianism – Inner harmony – Compassion for others	-0.08	0.03	-0.14	-0.03
Total effect				
Faith in humanity – Compassion for others	0.32	0.04	0.14	0.29
Humanism – Compassion for others	0.27	0.05	0.12	0.30
Kantianism – Compassion for others	0.19	0.05	0.06	0.26
Narcissism – Compassion for others	-0.01	0.03	-0.06	0.05
Psychopathy – Compassion for others	-0.11	0.04	-0.16	0.01
Machiavellianism – Compassion for others	-0.12	0.04	-0.17	-0.01

In case of the Light Triad dimensions, the examination of indirect effects demonstrated

that inner harmony was a mediator between faith in humanity and compassion for others

($B = 0.09$, $CI = 0.05, 0.18$). Thus, faith in humanity had a positive relationship with inner harmony ($B = 0.37$, $CI = 0.30, 0.57$), which in turn had a positive relationship with compassion for others ($B = 0.28$, $CI = 0.09, 0.22$). Next, inner harmony mediated between humanism and compassion for others ($B = 0.10$, $CI = 0.05, 0.17$). Humanism was positively related to inner harmony ($B = 0.31$, $CI = 0.27, 0.59$), which in turn was positively related to compassion for others ($B = 0.30$, $CI = 0.11, 0.24$). Inner harmony was also a mediator between kantianism and compassion for others ($B = 0.08$, $CI = 0.02, 0.14$). Thus, kantianism had a positive relationship with inner harmony ($B = 0.22$, $CI = 0.16, 0.51$), which in turn had a positive relationship with compassion for others ($B = 0.33$, $CI = 0.12, 0.26$).

Mediational effects were also found for the dimensions of the Dark Triad. First, inner harmony mediated between narcissism and compassion for others ($B = -0.05$, $CI = -0.10, -0.01$). Narcissism was negatively associated with inner harmony ($B = -0.14$, $CI = -0.22, -0.02$), which in turn was positively associated with compassion for others ($B = 0.37$, $CI = 0.14, 0.27$). Second, inner harmony was a mediator between psychopathy and compassion for others ($B = -0.07$, $CI = -0.13, -0.03$). Psychopathy was negatively related to inner harmony ($B = -0.20$, $CI = -0.41, -0.11$), which in turn was positively related to compassion for others ($B = 0.35$, $CI = 0.13, 0.26$). Finally, inner harmony mediated the relationship of machiavellianism with compassion for others ($B = -0.08$, $CI = -0.14, -0.03$). Machiavellianism had a negative association with inner harmony ($B = -0.22$, $CI = -0.44, -0.14$), which in turn had a positive association with compassion for others ($B = 0.36$, $CI = 0.13, 0.27$). Overall, the total number of statistically significant indirect pathways obtained in our study was 6 (3 paths for the Light Triad and 3 paths for the Dark Triad).

Total effects of faith in humanity, humanism, and kantianism on compassion for others turned out to be significant, respectively. For the Dark Triad, only the total effect of machiavellianism on compassion for others was statistically significant. The exact results are given in Table 2.

DISCUSSION

This study aimed at understanding the nature of relationships between the Light and Dark Triads and compassion for others within a mediational context of inner harmony among teachers. The most important result showed that inner harmony mediated the relationship of all dimensions of both the Light and Dark Triads with compassion for others. To our knowledge, this is the first study to reveal such effects among teachers, which has important implications for school education. Compassion and individual well-being are essential personal assets that research indicates could be linked to active involvement within the professional environment [31,32]. Educators who demonstrate heightened colleague engagement typically exhibit improved performance, show reduced inclination to consider leaving the teaching profession, and foster more positive connections with their students. Consequently, these students, in turn, tend to achieve higher levels of academic success and perform better at school [33,20].

Direct associations between the Light vs. Dark Triad and compassion for others

As mentioned before, the correlational results showed that the three dimensions of the Light Triad: faith in humanity, humanism, and kantianism were positively related to three dimensions of compassion for others: kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness, and its total score. In contrast, faith in humanity and kantianism were negatively related to indifference. The obtained results are not surprising, as mentioned earlier, the dimensions of the Light Triad are associated with prosocial behaviors. Individuals scoring high in the scales of the Light Triad have a positive, compassionate, and humanitarian orientation toward others [9]. The obtained results are consistent with previous research on the associations between the dimensions of the Light Triad and prosocial behaviours online. The study conducted by March et al. revealed that having faith in humanity and humanism significantly predicted positive prosocial behaviors on the Internet. On the other hand, kantianism did not show a significant effect, suggesting

that although being honest and genuine might discourage antisocial behaviors online, it does not actively encourage prosocial behaviors in the online environment [34].

Referring to the previously presented results, narcissism was also positively associated with indifference, psychopathy was negatively associated with kindness, and positively associated with indifference, and on the other hand machiavellianism was negatively associated with kindness, common humanity, mindfulness, and the total score of compassion, and positively associated with indifference. Existing literature provides numerous examples of trait empathy being inversely associated with psychopathy, machiavellianism and narcissism. These findings reinforce the negative perception of the Dark Triad traits and lend support to the foundational theoretical proposal that a lack of empathy serves as a common underlying element binding these traits together [35]. Previous research has established a connection between the Dark Triad traits and dispositional empathy, but not with compassionate feelings when witnessing others' suffering. To address this gap in the literature, researchers investigated how the Dark Triad traits influence state compassion using a validated film-based approach. To investigate this, college students watched a movie scene depicting a distressed child witnessing his father's death. The findings showed that psychopathy negatively predicted compassion for the child, while narcissism had a positive effect. These the Dark Triad traits accounted for compassion variance beyond demographic factors, grief symptoms, and trait empathy. Additionally, empathic and emotional processes played unique roles in mediating the relationships between the Dark Triad traits and compassion [14].

The mediating effects of inner harmony

The research has shown inner harmony mediated all three dimensions of the Light Triad: faith in humanity, humanism and kantianism, and all three dimensions of the Dark Triad: narcissism, psychopathy and machiavellianism with compassion for others. So far, no similar studies have been conducted that would examine the relationships between the Light and Dark Triads

with compassion for others, with the mediating role of inner harmony.

The obtained results find confirmation in previously conducted research. All dimensions of the Light Triad: faith in humanity, humanism, and kantianism, were positively correlated with inner harmony [36]. The Light Triad was positively associated with life satisfaction, personal development, compassion, and empathy, while displaying negative associations with interpersonal aggression, selfishness, and anxiety. Furthermore, achieving higher scores in the Light Triad has been shown to correlate with increased motivation to establish stable and cooperative interpersonal connections [37]. Additionally, individuals with higher scores in the Light Triad traits were less prone to engaging in malevolently creative behaviors following instances of abusive supervision, in contrast to those scoring lower in the Light Triad [38]. Furthermore, the research has shown that dimensions of the Light Triad are positively related to well-being, in contrast to dimensions of the Dark Triad [39]. As mentioned earlier, inner harmony is defined as a key aspect of happiness [15], and experiencing positive emotions by an individual leads to more satisfying, empathy-based, and compassionate relationships with others [17,19,20].

The most significant result of this study is to demonstrate that inner harmony mediates between the dimensions of the Light and the Dark Triads and compassion for others. The dimensions of the Light and the Dark Triads are stable personality traits in an individual that significantly allow predicting how a person will perceive inner harmony, comprising inner peace, inner balance, contentment, and psychophysical well-being. As mentioned earlier, the dimensions of the Light Triad favour sympathy, compassion, and humanity, which stand in contrast to the traits associated with the Dark Triad, predicting aggressive behaviours, violence, and low empathy among individuals [5]. Thus, the relationship of positive and negative personality traits with compassion is mainly indirect rather than direct.

LIMITATIONS

Our study has several limitations. Firstly, the research group consisted predominantly of wom-

en (87%), compared to the number of men (13%). Although the sample reflects the real and current gender ratio of teachers in Poland, any conclusions on gender should be drawn with caution. Secondly, as our study was cross-sectional, it does not allow us to draw any causal conclusions about the variables studied. Thirdly, given that some individuals may be very sensitive when answering questions related to the Dark Triad, future studies should also incorporate other measures assessing the negative dimensions of one's personality [9,12]. Finally, a significant majority of teachers worked in primary schools (62%), with only 12% in preschools and 1% at the university level. Gender and workplace factors might have a substantial impact on the results, so they should be taken into consideration in future research.

CONCLUSIONS

Despite several limitations, the results obtained in this study are satisfactory and allow us to confirm all four of the formulated hypotheses. As mentioned earlier, there have been no studies linking the traits of the Light and Dark Triads with compassion for others, with the mediating role of inner harmony among teachers, so it was decided to fill this gap. The results clearly demonstrated that inner harmony mediated the relationship of the Light and Dark Triad dimensions with compassion for others among Polish teachers. This reflects the important role of teachers having an attitude of inner balance, calmness, and coherence. Creating conditions in which students feel emotionally safe and have the opportunity to be heard is crucial for their achievements and development. Considering that compassion for others is an essential construct, especially in the role of a teacher, it seems justified to further develop research and concepts within this research group.

REFERENCES

- Gilbert P. Explorations into the nature and function of compassion. *Current Opinion in Psychology*. 2019; 28: 108-114.
- Główny Urząd Statystyczny [https://stat.gov.pl/]. Warszawa: Główny Urząd Statystyczny; [updated 2023 Oct 31; cited 2024 Jan 24]. Available from: <https://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/edukacja/edukacja/oswiata-i-wychowanie-w-roku-szkolnym-20222023,1,18.html>
- Sun J. Mindfulness in Context: A Historical Discourse Analysis. *Contemporary Buddhism*. 2014; 15: 394-415.
- Levine RV, Martinez TS, Brase G, Sorenson KJ. Helping in 36 U.S. cities. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. 1994; 67: 69-82.
- Kaufman SB, Yaden DB, Hyde E, Tsukayama, E. The light vs. dark triad of personality: Contrasting two very different profiles of human nature. *Frontiers in Psychology*. 2019; 10: 1-26.
- Jonason PK, Webster GD. The dirty dozen: a concise measure of the dark triad. *Psychological assessment*. 2010; 22(2): 420-432.
- Gallagher MW, Teramoto Pedrotti J, Lopez SJ, & Snyder CR. Hope. In M. W. Gallagher & S. J. Lopez (Eds.), *Positive psychological assessment: A handbook of models and measures* (pp. 77-95). Washington DC: American Psychological Association; 2019.
- Lomas T, & Ivtzan I. Second wave positive psychology: Exploring the positive-negative dialectics of wellbeing. *Journal of Happiness Studies*. 2016; 17: 1753-1768.
- Gerymski R, Krok D. Psychometric properties and validation of the Polish adaptation of the Light Triad Scale. *Current Issues in Personality Psychology*. 2019; 7(4): 341-354.
- Chudy J. Racial sympathy and its political consequences. *The Journal of Politics*. 2021; 83(1): 122- 136.
- Neff KD, Germer CK. A pilot study and randomized controlled trial of the mindful self-compassion program. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*. 2013; 69(1): 28- 44.
- Paulhus DL, & Williams KM. The dark triad of personality: Narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy. *Journal of research in personality*. 2003; 36(6): 556-563.
- Miller JD, Dir A, Gentile B, Wilson L, Pryor LR., Campbell WK. Searching for a vulnerable dark triad: Comparing factor 2 psychopathy, vulnerable narcissism, and borderline personality disorder. *Journal of Personality*. 2010; 78: 1529-1564.
- Lee SA, Gibbons, JA. The Dark Triad and compassion: Psychopathy and narcissism's unique connections to observed suffering. *Personality and Individual Differences*. 2017; 116: 336-342.
- Delle Fave A, Brdar I, Wissing MP, Araujo U, Castro Solano A, Freire T, et al. Lay definitions of happiness across nations: the primacy of inner harmony and relational connectedness. *Frontiers in Psychology*. 2016; 7: 30.
- Carreno DF, Eisenbeck N, Pérez-Escobar JA, & García-Montes JM. Inner harmony as an essential facet of wellbeing: a multinational study during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 2021; 12: 648280.
- Fredrickson BL. The role of positive emotions in positive psychology: the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. *American Psychologist*. 2001; 56: 218-226.
- Fredrickson BL. Positive emotions broaden and build. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*. 2013; 47: 1-53.

19. Boehm JK, Lyubomirsky S. Does happiness promote career success? *Journal of Career Assessment*. 2008; 16, 101–116.
20. Ilies R, Scott BA, Judge TA. The interactive effects of personal traits and experienced states on intraindividual patterns of citizenship behavior. *Academy of Management Journal*. 2006; 49: 561–575.
21. Morgeson FP, Humphrey SE. The Work Design Questionnaire (WDQ): developing and validating a comprehensive measure for assessing job design and the nature of work. *Journal of Applied Psychology*. 2006; 91, 1321–1339.
22. Warr P. Searching for happiness at work. *Psychologist*. 2007; 20: 726–729.
23. Jomud PD, Antiquina LMM, Cericos EU, Bacus JA, Vallejo JH, Dionio BB, Bazar JS, Cocolan JV, Clarin AS. Teachers' workload in relation to burnout and work performance. *International journal of educational policy research and review*. 2021; 8(2): 48-53.
24. Heszen-Niejodek I, Gruszczyńska E, Metlak, A. *Kwestionariusz Samoopisu*. [The Self-description Questionnaire]. Katowice: Uniwersytet Śląski; 2003.
25. Pommier E, Neff KD, Tóth-Király I. The Development and Validation of the Compassion Scale. *Assessment*. 2020; 27(1): 21–39.
26. Czarna AZ, Jonason PK, Dufner M, Kossowska M. The Dirty Dozen Scale: Validation of a Polish version and extension of the nomological net. *Frontiers in Psychology*. 2016; 7: 445.
27. Fopka-Kowalczyk MJ, Flakus M, Kocur DJ. Skala współczucia dla Innych (CS-R-PL). *Przegląd Badań Edukacyjnych*. 2022; 38: 1-44.
28. Faul F, Erdfelder E, Buchner A, Lang AG. Statistical power analyses using G*Power 3.1: Tests for correlation and regression analyses. *Behavior Research Methods*. 2009; 41: 1149-1160.
29. Hair J, Black W, Babin B, Anderson R. *Multivariate data analysis*, Upper Saddle River, NJ [etc.]. Pearson Prentice Hall. New York: Macmillan; 2009.
30. Hayes AF. *Introduction to mediation, moderation, and conditional process analysis: A regression-based approach* (2nd ed.). New York: Guilford Publications; 2018.
31. Mason VM, Leslie G, Clark K, Lyons P, Walke E, Bulter C, Griffin M. Compassion fatigue, moral distress, and work engagement in surgical intensive care unit trauma nurses: A pilot study. *Dimensions of Critical Care Nursing*. 2014; 33: 215–225.
32. Mauno S, Ruokolainen M, Kinnunen U, De Bloom J. Emotional labour and work engagement among nurses: Examining perceived compassion, leadership and work ethic as stress buffers. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*. 2016; 72: 1169–1181.
33. Bakker AB, Schaufeli WB, Leiter MP, Taris TW. Work engagement: An emerging concept in occupational health psychology. *Work Stress*. 2008; 22: 187–200.
34. March E, Marrington JZ. Antisocial and prosocial online behaviour: Exploring the roles of the Dark and Light Triads. *Current Psychology*. 2023; 42(2): 1390-1393.
35. Paulhus DL. Toward a taxonomy of dark personalities. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*. 2014; 23(6): 421-426.
36. Krok D, Zarzycka B, & Telka E. The perception of COVID-19, the Light Triad, harmony and ethical sensitivity in late adolescents: The role of meaning-making and stress. *Scientific Reports*. 2023; 13(1): 8122.
37. Sevi B, Doğruyol B. Looking from the bright side: The light triad predicts tinder use for love. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*. 2020; 37: 2136–2144
38. Malik OF, Shahzad A, Waheed A, & Yousaf Z. Abusive supervision as a trigger of malevolent creativity: Do the Light Triad traits matter? *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*. 2020; 41: 1119.
39. Stavradi M, Artacho-Mata E, Bajo M, & Díaz D. The dark and light of human nature: Spanish adaptation of the light triad scale and its relationship with psychological well-being. *Current Psychology*. 2022; 1-10.