



22. DANI PSIHOLOGIJE U ZADRU
22nd PSYCHOLOGY DAYS IN ZADAR

KNJIGA SAŽETAKA
BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

Odjel za psihologiju
Sveučilište u Zadru

Department of Psychology
University of Zadar

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THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOON(-LANDING): THE RELATIONS BETWEEN BELIEF IN CONSPIRACY THEORIES AND DARK TETRAD

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In the past ten years there was a growing interest in the research of conspiracy theories, mainly because of their undesirable effects on social behavior, such as non-adherence to official medicine, voting or pro-social behavior (volunteering), etc. A number of psychological studies showed relations between many personality traits and belief in conspiracy theories. It can be argued that conspiracy mentality could be, at least partially, rooted in the traits of personality we find especially dark. One set of those traits is summarized in the construct of Dark Tetrad. The Dark Tetrad is comprised of Machiavellianism, Narcissism, Psychopathy, and Sadism and demonstrates predictive power for a variety of socially relevant outcomes. Therefore, the main aim of this study was to examine the relations of the Dark Tetrad and belief in conspiracy theories. A total of 138 university students (MAGE = 20.09, SDAGE = 2.68, 79% females) took part in the study. Participants completed the Short Dark Triad questionnaire, measuring MC, NC, and PS (9 items each, $\alpha = .77$, $\alpha = .71$, $\alpha = .72$, respectively), Direct sadism scale from VAST questionnaire measuring SD ($\alpha = .72$), and Belief in specific conspiracy theories questionnaire ($\alpha = .88$) comprised of 14 items reflecting conspiracy theories known by and relevant to the Serbian public. The results have shown significant correlations between belief in conspiracy theories and all four dark traits – Machiavellianism ($r = .43$, $p < .001$), Narcissism ($r = .19$, $p = .027$), Psychopathy ($r = .33$, $p < .001$), and Sadism ($r = .38$, $p < .001$). Regression analysis ($F(4,132) = 9.22$, $p < .001$, $R^2_{ADJ} = .20$) have shown that only Machiavellianism had exclusive predictive effect on belief in conspiracy theories ($\beta = .31$, $p = .002$) while Direct sadism achieved marginal significance ($\beta = .21$, $p = .054$). Since people who are higher on trait Machiavellianism are exploitative and manipulative, we believe that explanation for these results may come from earlier research showing that people who are prone to conspire themselves will project this tendency to others and will thus show higher belief in conspiracy theories. Additionally, a similar mechanism may explain the potential effect of sadism – those who are deriving pleasure from hurting others may believe that some people are just as vicious as they are and hence tend to believe in narratives that propose exceptionally evil plans.

Ključne riječi / Keywords: conspiracy theories; dark tetrad; machiavellianism, narcissism, psychopathy, sadism.

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