

# ACADEMIC CAREER INTERESTS AND DARK TRIAD: EVIDENCE FROM BRAZILIAN POSTGRADUATE ACCOUNTING STUDENTS

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## Abstract

**Objective:** The study aimed at verifying the association between Dark Triad and the interest in activities related to academic career among postgraduate accounting students.

**Method:** The sample consisted of 124 students from postgraduate programs in the Accounting Sciences in Brazil. Data were collected through a survey and submitted to multivariate analysis.

**Results:** The results show that narcissism and psychopathy are related to activities inherent to the academic career, while Machiavellian traits do not exhibit the same association. The lack of correlation between Machiavellianism and academic career activities may be related to the desired academic career profile. Students with narcissistic traits are adept at academic career activities mainly related to research and teaching. Psychopathic traits were not adept at activities related to teaching and extension (service to the external community), which may be related to the lack of empathy, lack of concern related to compliance with rules and insensitivity.

**Contributions:** The study contributes to the gap in accounting research that discusses non-pathological personality traits and career interests, since previous research has demanded attention in view of the objective and subjective issues inherent to the career and, at times, marginalize the relevant activities career choice. In addition, such discussions are presented as an advisory material for HEIs in terms of outlining the performance and interest of future teachers regarding the activities inherent to the academic career.

**Keywords:** Academic Career in Accounting, Dark Triad, Brazilian Students, Accounting Education.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

The Dark Triad is represented by three dimensions of non-pathological personality traits that include Narcissism, Machiavellianism and Psychopathy. Narcissists are individuals who have a sense of grandiosity and an excessive need for admiration. Machiavellians act cold and in an exploitative way. Psychopaths act impulsively and have low self-control (Volmer, Koch, & Göritz, 2016).

The three dimensions of the Dark Triad have in common a malevolent character, emotional coldness, duplicity, aggressiveness, and a tendency towards self-promoting behavior (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). Despite having overlapping characteristics, studies show they have specificities that make their characterization and distinction possible.

Non-pathological approach to personality traits has gained attention in the Applied Social Sciences field, since these characteristics are capable of influencing the individual's experiences in the most plural contexts, which include work, social relationships, career and behavior (O'Boyle Jr., Forsyth, Banks, & McDaniel, 2012; Schneider, McLarnon, & Carswell, 2017). Thus, different behavioral manifestations need to be constantly evaluated, because the underlying personality processes are closely associated with the individual's career and professional interests (Jones & Paulhus, 2011; Schneider et al., 2017).

The subjectivity of concepts linked to personality traits and belonging to the Social Sciences area makes their exploration even more challenging, being the career construct belonging to this group. Goffman (1961, p. 127) defines career as "any social strand of any person's course through life". In Sociology, it is observed from a social, individual and institutional perspective, related to historical forms of the labor division (Tripiet, Dubar, & Boussard, 2005). Psychology introduced the cognitive and interpretation aspects for its understanding. The Applied Social Sciences area recognizes the career as a phenomenon that allows the allocation of resources in the organizational environment (Bendassolli, 2009).

Since the studies advocated by Holland (1978, 1997), interest in theorizing the link between personality and career traits has gained researchers' agenda (Volmer et al., 2016; Kowalski, Vernon, & Schermer, 2017; Schneider et al., 2017; D'Souza & Lima, 2018; Hong & Emagnaw, 2019). This literature has strengthened the argument that the Dark Triad is an important determinant in the choice and interest in the career in different organizational contexts (LeBreton, Shiverdecker, & Grimaldi, 2018) and in the socio-academic environment (D'Souza & Lima, 2018). LeBreton et al. (2018) pointed out the relevance of investigating the Dark Triad, as many researches gained notoriety in the organizational field and noted that maladaptive behaviors externalized in the organizational field can interfere in the organizations, relationships and even in the configuration of a career space. In addition, the Dark Triad levels have an influence on the attributes pertaining to the accounting career. This finding is a provocation for investigations to reach academic career spaces as well since there is precariousness regarding this construct in the Brazilian space.

However, a challenging aspect of the studies that intertwines the Dark Triad and Career is the popularity of elements known as objective career success and subjective career success (Volmer et al., 2016), and also the famous surveys, such as Jackson Vocational Interest, commonly used in research. The important point is that studies in different fields and contexts always demand the operationalization of these constructs considering the cultural and economic elements that permeate the individual development. Individuals and behaviors are the result of habits, customs, stories, race, religion, ethnicity, and population displacement. Therefore, in order to quantify and qualify career interests in different contexts, scales appropriate to the reality of the investigated individuals must be used to avoid the effects of fatigue and boredom in the research results (Kowalski et al., 2017).

Studies conducted by Jonason, Wee, Li and Jackson (2014) and Kowalski et al. (2017) employed different measures of professional interests in contexts and cultures of different countries. Thus, this study aims to verify the association between Dark Triad and the interest in activities related to academic careers among postgraduate accounting students. This objective is inspired, as some considerations about the accounting career are recognized. Initially, the academic career in accounting provides a space of freedom for individual choices in terms of research activities, teaching, extension (service to the external community) and the occupation of administrative positions. In addition, these choices may also be related to this specific environment, given the need for formative preparation to deal with the many scenarios existing in accounting, which includes attending to countless stakeholders, who lack information to make decisions.

That said, the accounting career and, consequently, the academic career in accounting, is also driven by the need for content adequacy that responds to the adoption of IFRS and global movements that value the fidelity of accounting information, for example. Finally, the academic career in accounting demands attention, as the expectations and aspirations of young professionals who perform their experiences in the academic space are transferred to the labor market, given the need for teaching preparation that leads to the preparation of the accounting professional. Thus, it is pertinent and relevant to map the intentions of postgraduate students about this possibility of scenarios that lead to different teaching activities.

It is recognized that there are numerous scales that measure personality, such as the Light Triad, which has positive measurement elements (Paulhus, 2014). However, the choice of Dark Triad was based on the idea that it is focused on the negative aspects that this discussion proposes to amplify, seeking to contribute to the creation of a disciplinary field (Garcia, 1999; André, 2010). Furthermore, there is a disciplinary field in Brazil around such a construct, which presents itself as a motivator for this choice.

It is believed that in the accounting area, as in other professional areas, making more realistic occupational choices in the workplace can have positive effects on job performance and increased motivation (Campbell, 1991), consequently it would reduce counterproductive behavioral manifestations in the institutional and academic environment. Thus, the study intertwines career aspects in accounting, especially in terms of academic career, and behavior, starting from the idea that elements from other aspects should be used to explain phenomena that happen in the accounting field, a fact that can challenge the fundamental reasoning discussed in this theme, especially those that affect the development of the area itself, when teaching and research are analyzed, for example, based on the personality traits of teachers, reflected in their behaviors and choices. Such action contributes to the formation of a disciplinary field based on the characteristics listed in this investigation (Garcia, 1999; André, 2010)

It is known that the aspects inherent to the individual are presented as potential influencers of the choice for the academic career in accounting. The point of interest from this recognition is to seek understanding whether the non-pathological personality traits, understood in this research as narcissism, Machiavellianism and psychopathy, are congruent to the activities of the academic career among postgraduate accounting students, which would represent an advance among prior research already socialized in the scientific field.

The intertwining aspects of the future teachers' personality and their interests for certain related activities, to the detriment of others, can be reflected in the teaching staff of an institution, and lead to difficulties in the relationship between teachers and management of activities that may be more or less intended by individuals in each of the traits, being able to generate greater or lesser satisfaction and performance, depending on the alignment between their characteristics and the characteristics and perceived returns of the activities.

This study has some contributions. First, Perry (2015) indicated that elevated levels of the Dark Triad in university leaders can be harmful to the university environment, because a sociopathic leader, to satisfy their goals and desires, for example, could marginalize the collaborative nature of those organizations. So, this discussion intends to develop a dialogue that has already started with the accounting scientific community. In this sense, one of the aspects that can be discussed is the fact that the university configuration involves the creation and development of research groups, where researchers should be partners, developing research as a group. However, some personality traits appear to be incompatible with this configuration and with the distribution of the gains with colleagues, which could hinder the maintenance of research groups.

Finally, it can be argued that these traits, when they appear on elevated levels, could change the accounting spaces on the academy environment, like the environment of graduate and postgraduate courses, probably in a hostile way, from the socialization of individuals with these traits, which can indicate an imposition of personal interests against the interests of universities. In this way, this study can contribute to understanding the presence of the DT traits in this environment and the paths linked with the inherent academic career activities that tend to be of interest to individuals in the field.

## 2 DARK TRIAD AND CAREER

Three personalities considered socially aversive, among those presented by Kowalski (2001), received greater attention in the scientific field, narcissism, psychopathy and Machiavellianism and were organized by Paulhus and Williams (2002) in a set called Dark Triad. Narcissism can be characterized by feelings of superiority or grandiosity, seeking attention, exploitation of others and excessive self-love (Jones & Paulhus, 2011). The term originates in the mythological figure of Narcissus, who died as a result of the enchantment with his own reflection in a puddle of water (Williams, 2002). Raskin and Hall (1979) characterize non-clinical narcissism from the sense of self-importance, desire for success, power and brilliance, exhibitionism, negative behaviors such as indifference, anger, feelings of inferiority, shame and humiliation when receiving criticism, exploitation, and lack of empathy.

Niccolo Machiavelli is used as a basis for characterizing the behavior of the Machiavellian trait, based on the strategies for obtaining and maintaining political power described in his books. This philosopher mentions that people should be deceived and exploited to achieve political goals (Williams, 2002). Christie and Geis (1970) were the first to present the Machiavellian construct, being, mainly, a personality with the characteristic of manipulation focused on their goals. The main aspects related to this construct are deception, sense of entitlement, exploitation, and cynicism (Williams, 2002), being manipulative, insensitive, and strategic (Jones & Figueredo, 2013).

Psychopathy has as its main characteristics high impulsivity, low empathy, anxiety, and search for emotions (Paulhus & Williams, 2002), beyond criminal behavior (Jones & Paulhus, 2011), with manipulative and insensitive dispositions focused on the short term (Jones & Figueredo, 2013). Characteristics such as lack of concern for others and the rules and absence of guilt can also be observed in psychopaths (O'Boyle Jr. et al., 2012). Williams (2002) mentions that the first author to present the key components of psychopathy was Emily S. Cleckley, in 1941, showing clinical aspects related to this trait, such as superficial charm, coldness, lack of sincerity and antisocial behavior, while Hare's instrument (1985) was one of the first and main ones used to transport such characteristics to the subclinical sphere.

Dark Triad traits have been used to explain choices in the workplace, which include the academic career in accounting (Kowalski et al., 2017; Schneider et al., 2017; D'Souza, & Lima, 2018; Marçal, Carva-

lho, Bufoni, & Cruz, 2018) given that the association between the personality of individuals and their professional interests can affect motivation and performance in the work environment. The academic career in accounting is characterized by the practice of teaching, research, extension (service to the external community) and administrative positions in a university environment of higher education. That said, the university space allows for countless activities to be developed by individuals who choose this type of career.

Thus, the academic career activities in accounting may be described in activities such as teaching, guiding scientific research, conducting extension projects and occupying administrative functions (as a course coordinator, e. g.) or even becoming dean of an educational institution.

Kowalski et al. (2017) studied 858 American volunteers and identified that each of the components of the Dark Triad relates to different interests. They identified that narcissism is positively correlated with interests in social, business and adventure careers; Machiavellianism showed a negative correlation with social careers and work styles involving energy, accountability, academic achievement, and interpersonal trust; psychopathy was positively correlated to interests in physical sciences, engineering, jobs that involve adventure, leadership, finance, sales and law. In addition, psychopathy was negatively related to social interests, such as teaching and social work, for example, as well as to work styles that involve energy, accountability, academic achievement, planning, and interpersonal trust.

Schneider et al. (2017) use the Dark Triad as a complement to the construct called the five-factor model (FFM), which includes conscientiousness, extroversion, agreeableness, openness to experience, and emotional stability, and was the model traditionally used in research that related psychological and career aspects. They found that the Dark Triad represents an improvement in relation to career choices when analyzed with FFM, representing a potential predictor of professional interests.

While D'Souza and Lima (2018) were investigating students of Accounting Sciences, they identified a relationship between Dark Triad and professional career interests and found that the aspects which motivate such a relationship are: having influence, being superior to others, being able to manipulate third parties, possess power and exercise high hierarchical positions.

In the academic environment, Marçal et al. (2018) studied master's students in Accounting Sciences in order to discover factors that exert significant influence in the decision for the academic career. After using an instrument with propositions based on the Theory of Planned Behavior, the results show that the intrinsic factor, like individual predilections or preferences, positively influences the academic career choice, while external factors (influence of close people, e. g.) and possible facilitators (number of vacancies and ease of access, e. g.) did not present such a relationship.

## 3 METHOD

### 3.1 Participants

The participants of the research comprise students regularly registered in 34 Postgraduate Programs in the Accounting Sciences area in Brazil. The choice for postgraduate students is justified by the approach that it has, in Brazil, for the academic career, since most of Brazilian master's and doctoral programs are academic and aim to train professors and researchers. Thus, it is understood that the individuals inserted in the Brazilian postgraduate environment, as a professor or student, have interests associated with the academic career. From the experiences to which they are exposed during the postgraduate course, they

tend to develop interests regarding the career activities they intend to perform at the university spaces. In addition, it was considered that, as advocated by Meriac (2012), the behaviors manifested by an individual in the academic environment tend to be transposed to the work environment of that individual.

That said, the socialization of this student in the postgraduate environment will be reflected in his job market in the short and long term, understood as the academy. Data were collected from a survey made available through the Survey Monkey platform in January and February 2020. The sample consisted of 124 students, of which 52% were female, 48% male and 1% non-binary. In terms of the level, 57% were registered in the academic master's program, while 1% were in professional master's degrees, 42% were in the academic doctorate and there were no respondents who were pursuing a professional doctorate. Regarding the period of their master's or doctorate course, 30% of respondents were taking curricular courses, 33% were in the qualification phase, 11% in the post-qualification phase and 26% in the defense phase. In addition, 37% were scholarship holders in their master's or doctorate programs and 66% had experience as an accounting professor; 18% had up to one year of teaching experience, 22% between 1 and 3 years, 17% between 3 and 5 years, 9% between 5 and 7 years, and 34% more than 7 years of teaching experience.

### 3.2 Measures

#### 3.2.1 Dark triad

The Dark Triad (DT) was measured using the instrument called Short Dark Triad (SD3), developed and validated by Jones and Paulhus (2014), and translated by D'Souza (2016) into Portuguese. In this article, the version presented was translated to English from D'Souza's (2016) version. This action was necessary, as the research was applied with Brazilian students, and we sought to mitigate the noise regarding the application of a survey purely in English, which would limit the survey responses.

This way, such items were used to assess the traits of personalities embodied in narcissism (e. g., DT4: I know I am special because people keep saying that), Machiavellianism (e. g., DT12: I need to have important people by my side, no matter what it costs), and psychopathy (e. g., DT26: I like to tease unsuccessful people). The scale consists of 27 statements, with 9 items for each of the traits. It is a Likert-type measuring scale with 7 points ranging from Totally Disagree to Totally Agree and the command to complete the research instrument was aimed at evaluating their attitudes and position related to the Dark Triad traits towards their professional and career intentions in the field of Accounting Sciences. Thus, the respondent, from different commands to fill out the questionnaire, can position themselves in relation to Dark Triad and the intentions of academic career activities.

The responses were submitted to Confirmatory Factor Analysis seeking to reduce the components of each personality trait. In relation to the narcissism trait, 5 assertions were excluded that did not meet the statistical requirements, in the Machiavellianism trait, 2 assertions were excluded; and in psychopathy, 3 statements were excluded. It should be noted that such exclusions could affect the results, whether in terms of the research findings or in comparing these with previous studies on the subject. These exclusions, as they are different fields of application, sometimes occur, as seen in other studies in the area, since the respondent may not fully identify with the questionnaire, which is a limitation of the research and makes room for new investigations.

The composite reliability of non-pathological personality traits was 0.783 for Narcissism, 0.8202 for Machiavellianism and 0.846 for psychopathy. Cronbach's' Alphas ( $\alpha$ ) were 0.686 for narcissism, 0.740 for Machiavellianism and 0.818 for psychopathy. We chose to keep the narcissism variable, recognizing that

items related to its construction were excluded because they did not meet the statistical recommendations in the literature. Thus, it is observed that these constructs are not static and that over time they may change and receive contributions from the literature. The idea hovers in reconciling theoretical discussions with statistical validations. As for the implications of these for the results, it is observed that we are facing a new design of the construct for the present investigation.

### 3.2.2 Academic career interests in accounting

For the academic career activities measurement, a specific scale was elaborated according to the recommendations of Kowalski et al. (2017) and to better suit the activities. For the elaboration of the scale, initially, it was considered the experience of the researchers, who actively participate in teaching activities, teaching classes in undergraduate and graduate courses, interacting in research groups, performing academic extension (service to the external community) and articulating themselves to administrative and academic management for over 10 years on average.

Additionally, the authors are involved with postgraduate accounting students, whether during classes, as professors or colleagues, or in other academic environments, such as research labs or congress. In addition, 2 norms of the work regimes and activities of teachers in the careers of higher education and Basic Technical and Technological Education of 2 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) were taken as the basis, 1 public and 1 private. The first from the Federal University of Paraná, RESOLUTION No. 34/12 – CEPE, which approves the rules for the work and activity regimes of the Teaching Careers of Higher Education and Basic Technical and Technological Education, and the second from the Pontifical Catholic University of Minas Gerais provided for in the Teaching Career Statute.

The instrument on academic career in the Accounting Sciences area was composed of 65 statements. The content validity had the participation of six (6) specialists in the Accounting Sciences area with experiences focused on the disciplinary field of accounting education. These were chosen by the convenience of the present researchers, but also because they are considered able by the authors to verify the applicability and consistency of academic career activities in the area of Accounting Sciences, especially considering that they have 10 years on average of experience as professors, national and international accounting publications and experience in content validity. The instrument used a 7-point Likert scale, 1 = I do not agree and 7 = I agree, and, to complete this item of the research instrument, the respondent was asked to indicate their degree of pretension regarding the activities to be developed after the option for academic career in the area of Accounting Sciences.

The instrument was submitted to Exploratory Factor Analysis, using the VARIMAX method of rotation. The KMO test (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) was also used to assess the degree of partial correlations between the variables, from 0 to 1, considering that the closer to 1, the more appropriate is the usage of AFE (Fávero, Belfiore, Silva, & Chan, 2009) and Bartlett's sphericity test to identify the presence of correlations between variables (Hair Jr., Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2009). This process resulted in a set of five factors: i) personal aspects; ii) administrative positions; iii) teaching; iv) extension (service to the external community) and v) research.

The data referring to the process of validation and construction of academic career activities factors are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Data on factors of academic career activities

Factor	Initial Number of Assertions	Final Number of Assertions	KMO	Bartlett
Personal aspects	13	7	0.839	0.001
Administrative positions	17	15	0.877	0.001
Teaching	20	15	0.917	0.001
Extension (service to the external community)	5	5	0.782	0.001
Research	10	9	0.881	0.001

Source: Research data (2020).

The construct validity analysis was performed using Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ ), with values of 0.829 for personal aspects, 0.930 for administrative positions, 0.948 for teaching, 0.873 for extension (service to the external community) and 0.917 for research. For the validation process, composite reliability was adopted, with values of 0.870 to personal aspects, 0.936 to administrative positions, 0.954 for teaching, 0.906 to extension (service to the external community) and 0.933 to research. In addition, all components that made up the factors showed values above 0.5 in the main component matrix.

### 3.3 Data analysis

In order to verify the relationship between personality traits and the pretensions of activities inherent to the academic career in accounting, the correlation technique was applied. For the application of this technique and considering the structuring of the built research instrument, it was decided to constitute a latent variable with the aid of SmartPLS3.0 for each of the variables to be analyzed and correlated.

Thus, for the operationalization of the correlation, the normality of the data was initially analyzed using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. Due to the non-normality of the data, it was necessary to use non-parametric tests to assess the correlation between the variables investigated. Thus, Spearman's correlation was chosen as a metric that will guide the discussion of the results of this research (Field, 2009). In this study, in terms of the size of the effect between the coefficients, these were interpreted as recommended by Field (2009), therefore, considering the values  $\pm 0.1$  as a small effect, while values  $\pm 0.3$  indicate medium effect and values of  $\pm 0.5$ , a large one.

## 4 RESULTS

### 4.1 Descriptive analysis

In terms of academic career activities intentions, on the analyzed sample, the major average concentrated on assertions related to personal aspects, as seen in Table 2.

Tabela 2: Estatísticas descritivas da carreira acadêmica na área contábil

Assertions		Min.	Max.	Mean	Median	SD*
Personal aspects	To seek emotional stability.	1	7	4.46	5	2.112
	To live with intellectual people.	1	7	5.10	5	1.863
	To improve my family's financial situation.	1	7	6.27	7	1.204
	To change my local reality.	1	7	5.48	6	1.635
	To participate actively in the scientific and cultural development of my area of knowledge.	1	7	5.96	7	1.484
	To have autonomy in the development of my professional activities.	1	7	6.29	7	1.286
	To have a low level of routine activities in the Institution.	1	7	3.52	4	1.969
	To have flexibility in the development of my professional activities.	1	7	6.00	7	1.503
	To have professional growth opportunities.	1	7	6.49	7	1.071
To be constantly challenged.	1	7	5.57	6	1.624	



	To have financial stability.	1	7	6.36	7	1.284
	To have professional stability.	1	7	6.31	7	1.231
	To ensure continuous updating.	2	7	6.60	7	0.918
Administrative positions	To take administrative positions in the institution.	1	7	4.57	5	2.235
	To participate as a member of the public tender for teachers.	1	7	5.17	6	2.148
	To participate in examining boards for free teaching, master's dissertation, doctoral thesis, specialization, or undergraduate monograph.	1	7	5.56	7	1.914
	To participate in institutional performance evaluation committees.	1	7	4.85	5	1.949
	To participate in diploma revalidation commissions.	1	7	4.06	4	2.100
	To participate in Structuring Teaching Groups and other representations of the area (collegiate course, for example).	1	7	4.74	5	2.067
	To be head of the Administrative Unit.	1	7	3.69	4	1.989
	To be Coordinator of undergraduate courses.	1	7	3.80	4	2.216
	To be Coordinator of Stricto Sensu Post-Graduate Programs.	1	7	3.60	4	2.129
	To be Coordinator of Lato Sensu Post-Graduate Programs.	1	7	3.57	3,5	2.076
	To be a Director in the Administrative Unit.	1	7	3.36	3	1.997
	To be Editor of scientific journals.	1	7	4.17	4	2.182
	To be a member of development agencies.	1	7	3.56	4	2.057
	To be a member of academic associations (ANPCONT; ANPAD).	1	7	4.14	4,5	2.127
	To take administrative positions in academic associations (ANPCONT; ANPAD).	1	7	3.39	3,5	1.842
	To be Rector.	1	7	2.37	2	1.727
	To be a group tutor for the Tutorial Education Program – TEP.	1	7	3.32	3	2.002
Teaching	To evaluate students' academic performance.	1	7	5.56	6	1.822
	To guide master's dissertations.	1	7	5.47	6	1.889
	To supervise doctoral theses.	1	7	5.15	6	2.107
	To teach classes in short courses.	1	7	5.56	6	1.759
	To teach classes in doctoral courses.	1	7	4.90	6	2.214
	To teach classes in specialization courses (Lato Sensu).	1	7	5.85	7	1.596
	To teach classes in undergraduate courses.	1	7	6.40	7	1.319
	To teach classes in master's courses.	1	7	5.40	6	2.008
	To teach classes in technical courses.	1	7	4.73	5	2.162
	To give lectures.	1	7	5.54	6	1.722
	To provide support to students when requested.	1	7	6.36	7	1.171
	To guide undergraduate students in monograph and course completion work.	1	7	6.14	7	1.543
	To guide students in scientific initiation (undergraduate research) activities, monitoring, fellowship, extension scholarship and other training activities.	1	7	5.96	7	1.625
	To guide academic and / or extracurricular academic activities.	1	7	5.90	7	1.559
	To guide mandatory and non-mandatory internships in graduation.	1	7	5.52	6	1.815
	To guide monographs in specialization courses.	1	7	5.71	6	1.705
	To prepare classes and seminars.	1	7	6.22	7	1.329
	To supervise postdoctoral student.	1	7	3.97	4	2.277
	To ensure academic learning and the quality of teaching.	1	7	6.35	7	1.421
	To watch over the academic results in the external evaluation processes.	1	7	6.09	7	1.562
Extension (service to external the community)	To collaborate in high education institution articulation activities with the civil and professional community and other institutions.	1	7	5.78	6	1.423
	To develop post-graduation nucleation actions.	1	7	5.19	6	1.796
	To develop internationalization actions in the scope of post-graduation.	1	7	5.17	6	1.860
	To write and to promote extension projects.	1	7	5.35	6	1.785
	To coordinate extension projects.	1	7	5.24	6	1.923
	To evaluate scientific articles.	1	7	5.65	6	1.673
	To discuss research with peers.	1	7	5.96	7	1.553

Research	To write scientific articles	1	7	6.06	7	1.591
	To write textbooks.	1	7	4.56	5	1.968
	To write theoretical books.	1	7	4.20	4	2.056
	To submit research projects to funding agencies.	1	7	5.51	6	1.932
	To lead Research Groups.	1	7	5.24	6	1.902
	To participate in scientific events.	1	7	6.23	7	1.397
	To participate in a Research Group.	1	7	6.08	7	1.512
	To be a CNPq productivity scholarship holder.	1	7	4.52	4	2.243

Source: Research data (2020).

\*SD = Standard Deviation.

This result indicates a greater tendency to search for personal interest within the academic career in accounting. It is also noteworthy that the highest average usage is activated as “Watch over the continuous update”, which indicates a concern of the participants to keep up to date with changes, taking into account the personal aspect, but, at the same time, it can contribute to their professional practice in the academy, improving other aspects of their career.

To administrative positions, a greater agreement is in the statement “Participating in examining boards of free teaching, master's, doctoral dissertation, specialization or graduation monograph”, while in teaching the statement “Teaching classes in undergraduate courses” was a highlight. Among the research activities, the one that stood out the most was "Participating in scientific events". These assertions seem to exhibit the main body of the academic career in accounting in each of the aspects used, where examining boards, teaching in undergraduate courses and participation in scientific events and activities that are inherent to the academic career.

In terms of the Dark Triad, the smallest media concentrated on the psychopathy trait, as presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of the Dark Triad.

Assertions		Min.	Max.	Mean	Median	SD*
Narcissism	People see me as a natural leader.	1	7	4.19	4	1.868
	I hate to be the center of attention.	1	7	3.45	4	1.796
	Many group activities tend to be boring without me.	1	7	2.38	2	1.560
	I know I'm special because people keep saying that.	1	7	2.63	2	1.823
	I like to meet important people.	1	7	4.49	5	1.940
	I feel ashamed when I receive compliments.	1	7	3.45	3	1.849
	I've been compared to famous people.	1	7	2.52	2	1.927
	I'm a common person.	1	7	2.22	2	1.565
Machiavellianism	I insist on receiving the respect I deserve.	1	7	4.15	5	2.103
	It is not prudent to tell my secrets.	1	7	5.29	6	1.860
	In general, people do not work hard unless they are forced to.	1	7	4.02	4	1.699
	I need to have important people by my side, no matter what it costs.	1	7	2.36	2	1.688
	I avoid direct conflict with others because they can be useful in the future.	1	7	3.63	4	1.841
	It is prudent to keep track of information that I can use against people later.	1	7	2.10	1	1.612
	I wait for the right moment to get one's own back.	1	7	1.94	1	1.622
	There are things that I hide from other people because they don't need to know.	1	7	4.33	5	2.094
Psychopathy	I make sure that my plans benefit me, not others.	1	7	2.21	1	1.624
	I believe that most people can be manipulated.	1	7	3.30	3	2.048
	I like to retaliate against people who have authority.	1	6	1.77	1	1.274
	I avoid dangerous situations.	1	7	3.13	3	1.874
	Revenge has to be quick and unpleasant.	1	6	1.51	1	1.151
Psychopathy	People usually say that I'm out of control.	1	7	1.55	1	1.296
	It is true that I can be mean to people.	1	7	2.30	1	1.839
	People who make fun of me always regret it.	1	7	2.19	1	1.635

	I've never had a problem with the law.	1	7	1.81	1	1.731
	I like to tease unsuccessful people.	1	6	1.38	1	0.907
	I will say anything to get what I want.	1	6	1.46	1	1.115

Fonte: Dados da pesquisa (2020).

\*DP = Desvio Padrão.

This result corroborates with those proposed by Williams (2002) and D'Souza & Lima (2018), carried out with students in Canada and in Brazil, and also those of Jonason et al. (2014) and Jones and Paulhus (2014), carried out with other populations. The lowest level of agreement was presented for the statement "I like to tease unsuccessful people", which belongs to the psychopathic trait and, in contrast, the highest was to "It is not prudent to tell my secrets", related to the trait of Machiavellianism, suggesting that respondents do not present high levels of insensitivity and low empathy, however, they tend to use strategy in the exercise of their activities.

In terms of narcissism, the statement with the highest average agreement was "I like to meet important people", indicating the presence of vanity and exhibitionism characteristics among the respondents. These aspects of behavior, associated with greater agreement regarding the strategy usage, may indicate that the respondents use it to obtain greater prestige and recognition in the academic environment.

#### 4.2 Correlation analysis

For the joint analysis of the Dark Triad's traits with the aspects of the academic career, Spearman's correlation was performed, whose results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Correlation between variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
(1) Personal aspects	1.000							
(2) Administrative positions	0.514**	1.000						
(3) Teaching	0.541**	0.584**	1.000					
(4) Extension (service to the external community)	0.513**	0.482**	0.621**	1.000				
(5) Research	0.679**	0.564**	0.748**	0.702**	1.000			
(6) Narcissism	0.338**	0.286**	0.290**	0.200*	0.330**	1.000		
(7) Machiavellianism	-0.032	0.174	-0.032	-0.149	-0.101	0.075	1.000	
(8) Psychopathy	-0.218*	-0.117	-0.245**	-0.310**	-0.176	0.153	0.419**	1.000

Source: Research data (2020).

\*\* The correlation is significant at the 1% level

\* The correlation is significant at the 5% level

In terms of the activities inherent to the academic career in accounting, it was identified that narcissism positively correlates significantly with personal aspects ( $r = 0.338$ ,  $p\text{-value} = <0.01$ ), administrative positions ( $r = 0.286$ ,  $p\text{-value} = <0.01$ ), teaching ( $r = 0.290$ ,  $p\text{-value} = <0.01$ ), extension (service to the external community) ( $r = 0.200$ ,  $p\text{-value} = <0.01$ ) and research ( $r = 0.330$ ,  $p\text{-value} = <0.01$ ). Machiavellianism showed no significant correlation to any of the variables analyzed, while psychopathy showed a significant negative correlation to personal aspects ( $r = -0.218$ ,  $p\text{-value} = <0.05$ ), teaching ( $r = -0.245$ ,  $p\text{-value} = <0.01$ ) and extension (service to the external community) ( $r = -0.310$ ,  $p\text{-value} = <0.01$ ).

### 4.3 Discussion

The study discusses the association of personality traits to the intentions of activities inherent to the academic career in accounting. The research results indicate that the personality traits of narcissism and psychopathy are associated with the intentions of activities inherent to the academic career in accounting. Based on the statistics presented, narcissism stood out positively on the activities inherent to the academic career in terms of administrative positions, teaching, extension (service to the external community) and research and also on personal aspects.

So, it can be said narcissism is associated with the intended activities related to academic careers among postgraduate accounting students. This latter association, concerning the personal aspects, was already expected given that the narcissist has a propensity to be selfish and self-centered (Williams, 2002), with a great sense of right (Raskin & Hall, 1979), seeking to reach, among other aspects, those who satisfy their personal desires, such as autonomy and flexibility in the performance of their tasks. Psychopathy also proves to be a driving factor in the subject's choice and adherence to the activities that will be performed in the academic environment, however, with a negative effect.

Machiavellianism seems to be the personality trait that is least related to teaching activities, due to the lack of correlations between it and the activities intended by the respondents. This result can be influenced by the strategist characteristic of this trait, which focuses on obtaining results in the long term (Williams, 2002), which may be out of line with the profile of the academic career in accounting, in which there are no significant returns (besides those already predefined), nor major developments in terms of positions, in which the Machiavellian could use manipulation and strategy, strong characteristics of his profile (Jones & Figueredo, 2013) to take new paths, as could be the case in the corporate environment. This finding may also be based on the fact that 80% of the respondents indicated that they were more interested in building their careers in a public institution, whose role of the teacher is limited to previously defined activities, without anticipating intense changes.

From these findings, it is observed that in the Brazilian context the development of activities related to the academic career among postgraduate accounting students is mainly related to the status that this profession can provide to its practitioner. Such inference is supported by the observation of an association between the aspects of this career and narcissism. This personality trait values the recognition and well-being of its peers. Thus, these individuals seek to manage their own ego from occupying prominent positions and academic leadership and still have control over the image which is transferred to the community. That said, it is recognized that financially in the Brazilian public sector career space, remuneration issues are limited, however, the interests for this career seem to overcome such questions. Despite the financial limitations on Brazilian public sector careers, on the other hand, the status positions are numerous, which allows these individuals to manage their career and ego.

On the other hand, narcissism seems to be the personality trait that is most correlated with the choice for academic career activities in accounting. This presents itself as a relevant fact for the postgraduate accounting environment, as the study by Volmer et al. (2016) and other authors already illustrate that the other characteristics of the Dark Triad are intertwined with socially malevolent personalities, with high levels of disagreement and lack of adaptability (Paulhus & Williams, 2002), with narcissism being the only related trait positively to social careers, such as teaching (Kowalski et al., 2017).

In terms of effect size, the strongest correlations among academic teaching activities and narcissism are in personal aspects and in research. A high effect on the correlation among personal aspects and narcissism can be related to one of the characteristics of this trait, self-love (Jones & Paulhus, 2011), which can indicate that these subjects tend to seek to satisfy their personal needs.

Research may be considered the one that most satisfies the ego needs present in this personality trait (Jones & Paulhus, 2011), since these academic career activities have a direct relationship with the external environment, from writing and, consequently, dissemination of scientific articles, participation in events and other activities that connect and disseminate the teachers to their peers in knowledge, being able to attribute greater prestige, given their desire for success (Raskin & Hall, 1979) and for admiration (Williams, 2002). Furthermore, the low effect size of the correlation among this trait and activities related to extension (service to the external community) is justified for the same reason, since such activities do not have so expressively such power to attribute (self) importance to the subject, which is an aspect sought by individuals with high levels of narcissism (Raskin & Hall, 1979).

The negative effect among psychopathy and administrative positions in the public sector is aligned, as subjects with psychopathic characteristics are not concerned with each other, since there is an absence of empathy (Paulhus & Williams, 2002), they are not concerned about complying with rules (O'Boyle Jr. et al., 2012) and sometimes taking up positions in the sector and in the socio-academic environment is strictly geared to serving the other and fulfilling the bureaucratic roles that surround any educational institution.

Teaching, extension (service to the external community) and personal aspects showed a negative relationship with psychopathy, an aspect aligned with the research by Kowalski et al. (2017), indicating that there is some inconsistency between this personality trait with the inherent activities of the academic career in accounting, which can also be characterized by a lack of self-control (Jones & Paulhus, 2011) and insensitivity (Jones & Figueredo, 2013), since teaching precedes such characteristics, especially in the student-teacher relationship, as well as the focus on the short term (Jones & Figueredo, 2013).

Such incongruity can have negative effects on the socio-academic environment, since these subjects, when they have traces of psychopathy, are insensitive and manipulative (Jones & Figueredo, 2013), in addition to lacking concern levels for the other (O'Boyle Jr. et al., 2012). The three characteristics listed above represent an aversion to those demands for the construction of the teaching-learning process. Such a fact can result in counterproductive behaviors in the institutional environment (Judge, Piccolo, & Kosalka, 2009) and negative effects on students' performance and motivation.

Narcissism has a positive relationship on the socio-academic environment as this trait tends to be positively associated to the activities of the academic career of the teacher, whereas psychopathy can have a negative relationship, since its associations have proved to be significant and negative. It is worth reminding that such non-pathological personality traits have characteristics that are superimposed, so the results in the socio-academic environment will be consequences of the manifestation levels in these personality traits throughout the career and/or the choices of activities that will be performed in the socio-academic environment.

## 5 CONCLUSION

### 5.1 Theoretical implications

Studies such as those by Jackson (2000), Volmer et al. (2016) and LeBreton et al. (2018) discussed the congruence of personality traits and interests in the career in organizational environments, illustrating the need for advances and improvement in metrics. This study escapes the traditionalism that surrounds research which discusses career interests, those that aim at identifying such a choice from elements such as salaries, number of promotions and job satisfaction, advancing to psychological aspects, which are considered as one of the main determinants of individuals' choices.

It was observed that narcissism and psychopathy are directly related to interests in activities relevant to the academic career in accounting. Particularly, the correlation coefficient ( $r = 0.338^{**}$ ,  $p$ -value =

0.001) identified between administrative positions and narcissistic personality traits provides support for insights that such a trait can provide alignment between individuals' personal characteristics and relevant assignments the position that will be assumed. This can result in positive consequences, since the narcissist can bring the institution to power and glory, since they have high levels of grandeur and self-promotion, as shown by Paulhus & Williams (2002).

On the other hand, it is highlighted the correlation coefficient ( $r = -0.310^{**}$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.001$ ) identified in the relationship between extension (service to the external community) and psychopathy denote that individuals with this trait exhibit behaviors with manipulative dispositions (Jones & Figueredo, 2013), lacking concern for others and the rules, and, among their actions, there is absence of guilt (O'Boyle Jr. et al., 2012), which can also lead to the abandonment of the position and his academic career, since they have high levels of impulsivity (Williams, 2002; Jones & Paulhus, 2011). In this scope, the results of the work will be consequences of the levels of personality traits, given the (in)congruence between these and the activities relevant to the academic career in accounting.

The study contributes to the gap in accounting research that discusses non-pathological personality traits and career interests, since previous research has demanded attention in view of the issues inherent to the career and, at times, marginalize activities related to career choice. In addition, the study illustrates that Machiavellianism was not associated to activities relevant to the academic career of accounting, that is, the manipulation of individuals in the socio-academic environment with a view to achieving objectives of a political nature is not envisioned in any of the activities, whether related to personal aspects, administrative positions, teaching, extension (service to the external community) and research. Thus, with parsimony it is noticed that individuals with Machiavellian traits do not see the possibilities of using strategy and manipulation to achieve long-term goals and obtaining returns, financial or not, in the academic career, although these exist, even though they exist less intensely than those that present themselves in the corporate environment.

## 5.2 Practical implications

In the long run, the entry of individuals into the socio-academic environment in the figure of university professors demands that university institutions should pay attention to such levels of personality traits, as Perry (2015) defends, due to their benefits and harms. It is true that some activities of the academic career in accounting are pre-established, however, others, such as the occupation of administrative positions, research development and extension (service to the external community), are subject to their choice, that is, within the socio-academic environment, it is indicated and/or invited. Therefore, when filling out such positions, one should be aware that personality traits are associated with the way the activity will be developed.

With this investigation, the possibilities of activities to be developed in the academic environment in the accounting area expand. The research presents an explicit outline of the possibilities of activities that can be developed by subjects who choose an academic career, which creates an advisory material so that future career opters know the configuration of the field so that it can perform their skills and competences. Thus, aligned with the study by Beyer, Herrmann, Meek, and Rapley (2010), this helps students of accounting postgraduate programs to understand the meaning of the option for an academic career in accounting, starting from self-knowledge to the understanding of which activities may be more aligned to their interests, identifying where their efforts should be concentrated so that they reach the congruence between their profile and their career, highlighting the plurality of activities that can be practiced in the socio-academic environment, in order to allow the best development of the student-teacher relationship and the teaching-learning process.

It is believed that personality traits can be in line with the construction of a teaching identity that can be intertwined with the identity of a researcher, the boss identity, a graduate professor identity, since the identified alignment between personality and activities can lead to an improvement in execution and can help reduce the problems faced by teachers and students in these processes.

Perry (2015) argues that the universities should pay attention to the selection process, because a sociopathic leader, for example, could degrade the academic relations of a university and consequently interfere with the college academic evaluation, such as the global ranking of universities or University Ranking of Folha. So the hiring and management of teachers can be identified with a practical implication of this investigation, in which it is perceived that the individual who has Machiavellianism traits probably would not adapt to the execution of the activities inherent to teachers, due to the lack of associations between them and the Machiavellian trait, with which such an individual could generate impact or even imbalance in the development of activities in a university, and may also generate counterproductive behavior, due to the misalignment with their interests and psychological profile (O'Boyle Jr. et al., 2012).

Thus, the idea hovers in seeking to provide explanations regarding the configuration of university accounting spaces with regard to postgraduate studies. If at some point in the selection process, the Dark Triad is included as part of the process, it is estimated that it will be a response from the field for the selection of the university faculty. Our study contributes to this discussion, which can be seen as a starting point. However, the present researchers have no control over the effects of this publication on the scientific community.

In addition, the identification of the existence of preference for certain activities due to the psychological profile also draws attention to the process of hiring and managing individuals with narcissistic and psychopathic traits within educational institutions, given that, if there are only narcissistic individuals in a given faculty, for example, there is a possibility that activities related to extension (service to the external community) will be neglected to the detriment of those who preferred by those who have this trait. These questions represent insights that should reach the agenda of managers and even public policy makers in the socio-academic environment. Discussing the performance of future professors can represent a gain for the university even when it comes to the creation of improvement programs and their well-being in the short and long term.

Other aspects to be mentioned refer to the possibility of competition for attention among narcissists who belong to the same work group, since this is a striking feature among these subjects (Raskin & Hall, 1979; Williams, 2002; O'Boyle Jr. et al., 2012), as well as care to be taken regarding to the inflated assessments that narcissists make of their own work, which do not always correspond to objective quality indicators (O'Boyle Jr. et al., 2012).

### 5.3 Limitations and future research

No research is exempt from limitations. The first limitation of this is due to the research design, because although the associations between Dark Triad and the activities inherent to the academic career have found theoretical-empirical support, it is recommended that they be viewed with caution, as there is, in this research, an attempt to develop a proposal for bringing students of postgraduate programs in accounting in Brazil closer to the activities of the academic career in accounting. Thus, the possibility of not having full knowledge of all activities relevant to the academic career is not ruled out, which leads to divergent interpretations, since they are not fully inserted in this.

It is recommended that, for greater approximation and reliability of the data, future research seeks to segregate positions regarding the activities of the academic career in accounting, considering the academic maturity of this subject, such as, for example, the stage in which he/she finds himself/herself in the post-graduation program, the level to which it belongs, whether master's or doctorate, or even the time of experience that he/she has as a teacher. Also, it can be suggested that a similar study could be developed using professors as subjects, instead of students of postgraduate programs, since they are socialized yet on the academic career.

The form of data collection and the time of availability of the questionnaire for the respondents are the second limitation. The research made use of a survey, which has only one form of contact with the student of postgraduate programs in accounting in Brazil, such contact is limited to a period of about 10 days, the period that the survey was available online. As much as the requirements for the composition of a reliable sample are satisfactory for the profile of the constructed research, this aspect cannot be ignored, constituting itself as a limitation. In this sense, future research can make use of multiple methods of approaching students, either through interviews, field observation or even by conducting data collection from a longitudinal perspective. Such approaches will be fundamental for the improvement of the results identified in the present investigation and the evolution of the research themes.

The research is based on the assumption that all students of postgraduate programs in accounting in Brazil will choose an academic career, since the research instrument did not list the option for identifying interests aimed at careers other than the academic one. Thus, this fact is illustrated as the third limitation of the investigation, and it is recognized that the option for master's and doctorate courses in accounting also has permeability for the corporate environment. Considering this scenario, it is valid to investigate whether the option for a master's and doctorate course would either not be aligned with the needs of the corporate environment and how this option would be intertwined in this environment in manifestation of personality traits.

In addition, another question that can amplify the results of this investigation is the inclusion of some variables in the discussion, like those related to empathy and social desirability. This recommendation follows the search for broader evidence related to the explanation about how individuals act in groups and establish relationships in the construction of the academic career, if also considered the elements of the Dark Triad. Perry (2015) argued that the characteristics of the Dark Triad traits can degrade the collaborative nature of academics' work with other staff, students and with society. So, the implications of research that involves career and the Dark Triad deserve more attention from the scientific community.

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