Understanding Leadership Dynamics in Post-Colonial Africa: Exploring the Impact of arcissism, Psychopathy, and Machiavellianism

Mutongoreni, Noah Ariel, Chirisa, Innocent, Muridzi, Gibson, Dhliwayo Shepherd

African Renaissance

ISSN: 2516-5305 (Online)

Vol. 21, (No. 4), December 2024

pp 113-136

doi.org/10.31920/2516-5305/2024/21n4a6

**Abstract**

This article aims to provide an understanding of the phenomenon of Dark

Triadic Leadership within the context of the first generation of African leaders

in the post-colonial era. Drawing insights from psychological literature, the

Dark Triad framework encompasses narcissism, psychopathy, and

Machiavellianism- traits associated with self-absorption, lack of empathy,

manipulation, and a thirst for power. The study aims to investigate Dark

Triadic Leadership traits among African leaders and evaluate their influence on

the contemporary challenges faced by African nations. Through meticulous

document and content analysis, the research uncovers compelling examples of

the prevalence and consequences of Dark Triadic Leadership traits among

post-colonial African leaders. Leaders like Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire (now the

Democratic Republic of Congo) exhibited narcissistic tendencies through

extravagant displays of wealth, contrasting starkly with the poverty experienced

by the population. Idi Amin of Uganda demonstrated psychopathic behaviour

through brutal and arbitrary acts of violence against his own people.

Additionally, figures like Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya employed Machiavellian

tactics to maintain power through manipulation and suppression of dissent.

These instances highlight how Dark Triadic Leadership traits manifested in the

governance of various African nations, resulting in corruption scandals,

prolonged civil conflicts, economic stagnation, high unemployment rates, and

authoritarian rule. In addition to individual traits, broader structural influences

significantly shape leadership behaviours and governance outcomes in African

nations. The findings of this study establish thatfactors such as historical

colonial legacies, weak institutional frameworks, uneven distribution of

resources, and external interference have profound effects on leadership

dynamics. In addition, the legacy of colonialism often left behind fragmented

societies, artificial borders, and systems that favoured control over inclusion,

setting the stage for power struggles and authoritarian tendencies among post-

colonial leaders. Therefore, this study recommends the establishment of

democratic systems to mitigate the potential negative effects of Dark Triadic

Leadership traits in African governance. It also emphasises the importance of

leadership training programs to promote ethical leadership practices and

incentivise leaders to prioritise the well-being and development of their nations

over personal gain.

**Keywords:**

Dark Triadic Leadership, Post-independence, Leadership traits,

Machiavellianism, Narcissism, Psychopathy