| **RESEARCH ARTICLE**

What Do We Know So Far About the Dark Triad at the Workplace? A Socio-Analytic Adaptationist Perspective

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| **ABSTRACT**

In this research, we reviewed how people with "dark" personalities adapt to their workplace. Although often viewed as socially undesirable for violating norms of cooperation and social exchange, behaviors associated with the "dark side" of personality may reflect a "predator" adaptation, which enables individuals with "dark" personalities to thrive in competitive situations. To date, little is known about how these individuals adapt to their workplace. Nevertheless, we strongly believe that 1) the predatory approach they use in their relationships during their time off is also manifested in their workplace relationships and 2) understanding how these individuals operate is important because it may help practitioners know how to approach them. Considering the existing literature, it seems that individuals with "dark" traits seek influential professional positions, such as leaders, managers, politicians, and entrepreneurs, which they try to occupy through opportunistic and exploitative behaviors often linked with detrimental organizational outcomes, such as low job performance and counterproductive work behaviors. This orientation, especially in the case of those high in psychopathy and Machiavellianism, may reflect their fast life history strategy manifested in getting ahead by getting against, in contrast to getting along. On the other hand, narcissists are initially perceived as good employees and also as good leaders due to their charisma. However, as soon as they spend enough time in the workplace, they are rated as questionable colleagues and managers by their co-workers and followers respectively. Variability in organizational outcomes between the Dark Triad traits, along with key issues and controversies are addressed.

| **KEYWORDS**

Dark Triad, organizational behavior, job performance, leadership, life history

Suppose we agree with the idea that organizations are open systems (Weber & Waeger, 2017). As such, we can infer that they can be understood as mini-societies, where organizational behavior is analogous to social behavior, reflecting its basic principles and dynamics. This is supported by the large body of organizational theories that are drawn from social psychology (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). To understand human behavior in the workplace, researchers focused on potential predictors and identified several categories of predictors of work-related outcomes, such as job performance, leadership, teamwork, job satisfaction, job turnover, and so on. One important category of predictors of organizational behaviors is individual differences, and more specifically, personality-related individual differences. Personality research deals with highlighting specific characteristics of human nature, namely, (1) what makes humans alike and (2) how humans differ when it comes to those characteristics (Hogan & Blickle, 2013). These two questions are very similar to those raised by researchers interested in understanding human nature.

From a socio-analytic point of view, human nature has three universal characteristics based on the features of human groups: (1) people have always lived in groups, (2) all groups have a hierarchy in which the individual strives for power, and (3) every group has a religion; therefore, religion is a cultural universal (Hogan & Blickle, 2013). Based on the aforementioned ideas,

human behavior has three unconscious motives: (1) people need attention, acceptance, and approval and suffer when rejected, (2) people strive for status and power and have a hard time accepting loss, and (3) people have an innate desire for structure, and are perpetually looking for meaning, since ambiguity and unpredictability causes them distress. In socio-analytic terms, these motives are understood as the need to get along and the need to get ahead (Hogan, 1982).

However, these central motives of human behavior are pursued in different manners by people, as they differ in the degree to which they seek acceptance, power, and meaning. Moreover, it is considered that people differ regarding their ability to satisfy these needs (Blickle, Wendel, & Ferris, 2010). As such, this view accounts for individual differences in personality. Over the years, a large body of research has grown in the field of personality in the workplace (Sackett & Walmsley, 2014). However, most of it focuses on the bright side of the personality, using general structural frameworks, such as the Big Five model (Barrick & Mount, 1991). In the last decade, it was found that new knowledge on how humans adapt to their environment can be gathered by focusing on the dark side of personality (Furnham & Richards, 2013), which was operationalized as the Dark Triad (Paulhus & Williams, 2002).

The Dark Triad traits refer to narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy (Jonason & Webster, 2010). Narcissism is characterized by egocentrism, self-orientation, lack of empathy, and a sense of grandiosity (Turner & Webster, 2018). Machiavellianism is best described by selfishness, immorality, manipulative and exploitative behavior (Jones & Paulhus, 2014). Psychopathy is linked with antisocial behavior, selfishness, a lack of remorse, recklessness, and callousness (Cale & Lilienfeld, 2002). Despite that Dark Triad traits are perceived as socially undesirable by virtue of the behaviors they underlie often running counter to social cohesion and violating the norms of cooperation and social exchange, it has been shown that these traits reflect an adaptive behavioral approach (Jonason et al., 2009), which some call a "predator" adaptation (Mealey, 1995).

From an evolutionary perspective, any trait which facilitates the survival or reproduction of an organism can be deemed adaptive (Buss, 2008). Those high in the Dark Triad traits successfully adapt through an agentic, exploitative, and opportunistic lifestyle (Jonason & Tost, 2010). As such, it may be argued that the dark side of personality, regardless of the way it is socially perceived, may enable some individuals to thrive in situations requiring high intrasexual competition, such as over-aggression (Mogilski et al., 2020). This exploitative and opportunistic orientation is reflected in a fast life history strategy (Jonason & Tost, 2010).

Life history theory (LHT) provides a framework for understanding how some people end up high in the Dark Triad traits. People who grew up in unpredictable and scarce environments tend to develop fast life history strategies, being governed by impulsivity, callousness, risk-taking, sensation-seeking, and aggressiveness (Jonason et al., 2017). In stark contrast, people who grew up in stable environments tend to develop slow life history, being governed by high self-regulation, prosociality, and conscientiousness (Figueredo et al., 2006). Those with fast life history strategies tend to have high reproductive rates, low parental investment, and short intergeneration intervals, as a potential consequence of adapting to harsh environments where life is unstable. Since harsh environments shorten life spans, developing a strategy which implies early reproduction can be evolutionary advantageous in such environments (Griskevicius et al., 2013).

LHT was used to explain mating strategies, relationships, family, and other aspects related to reproductive success in the case of those high in the Dark Triad traits (Jonason et al., 2017). Nevertheless, we strongly believe that this predatory approach they use in their relationships during their time off is also manifested in their workplace relationships. Interesting findings have already started to emerge from this line of research. For example, terms such as "successful psychopaths" and "toxic leadership" signal exploitative motives (Hall & Benning, 2006). However, it should be noted that this research was done in the area of leadership. Dark personalities exist at all levels of the labor market, and we believe that important conclusions can be drawn from studies that investigate the Dark Triad in different workplace contexts.

Evolutionarily and socio-analytically, human existence can be best understood based on two main motives: surviving, understood in terms of social behavior as the getting ahead motive, and reproduction understood as the getting along motive (Hogan, 1982). Modern work environments simultaneously require individual effort and competence (i.e., getting ahead) and cooperating with others to achieve individual and common goals (i.e., getting along). We argue that people high on the Dark Triad traits will prioritize getting ahead over cooperating with others, especially when the two options are incompatible. Strongly prioritizing the getting ahead motive over getting along may result in sabotaging others, which may be understood as getting against. This aspect may be adaptive or maladaptive depending on the working context (Jonason et al., 2014). It is important to know in which organizational areas these phenomena manifest. We believe that some preliminary conclusions about the predatory tendencies and career preferences of "dark" individuals can be drawn from the existing literature.

It is our belief that an adaptationist perspective on the organizational behavior of those high in the Dark Triad traits provides a functional understanding of work, which can answer the question of "why" those people manipulate and sabotage others, not only "how" they do so. This functional approach would offer new insights to practitioners, from managers, consultants, and psychologists, to co-workers of those high in the Dark Triad traits. In the next sections, we will discuss the current evidence on the links between dark personalities and vocational choice, career success, school and job performance, leadership attainment and efficacy, as well as undesirable behaviors, such as counterproductive work behaviors, and other organizational behaviors, attitudes, and dynamics.

The Dark Triad Traits and Vocational Choice

Professional life begins when a person chooses a career. This usually happens when college or technical school begins. By looking at the knowledge we have on the association between the Dark Triad traits and vocational choice, we can have a glimpse of what are the values and goals of those high in the Dark Triad traits.

It has been shown that individuals high on the Dark Triad traits are more inclined towards entrepreneurship (Do & Dadvari, 2017). Individuals high on narcissism reported high entrepreneurial intentions (Hmielski & Lerner, 2016). Individual differences in entrepreneurial preferences and abilities positively correlated with primary psychopathy, but were unrelated to secondary psychopathy. Secondary psychopathy did not predict entrepreneurial activity (Akhtar et al., 2013). Machiavellianism positively relates to entrepreneurial intention (rc = 0.16) and negatively relates to entrepreneurial performance (rc =0.22), narcissism positively relates to entrepreneurial intention (rc = 0.24) and entrepreneurial performance (rc = 0.09), and psychopathy positively relates to entrepreneurial intention (rc = 0.17) and negatively relates to entrepreneurial performance (rc = 0.10; Brownell et al., 2021).

Machiavellianism and narcissism consistently predicted perceived qualifications and success in a prospective political career (Blais & Pruysers, 2017). Based on expert ratings for 122 candidates having competed in 55 recent national elections worldwide and controlling for several covariates, the results indicate that a better performance at the ballot box is associated with high conscientiousness, openness to experience, and psychopathy. Conscientiousness and narcissism are associated with better results, especially for right-wing candidates (Nai, 2019).

Entrepreneurship and politics are among the professional domains associated with high social power. As we argued, those high in the Dark Triad traits are mainly oriented towards getting ahead, which is detrimental to getting along. Due to their fast life history strategies, they seek high social power, and they are willing to do whatever it takes in achieving them (Lee et al., 2013), because such vocational choices allow them to pursue their life goals.

Individuals high in psychopathy were more interested in realistic and practical careers, those high in narcissism were more interested in artistic, enterprising, and socially-orietned careers, and Machiavellians were more interested in avoiding careers that involved caring for others (Jonason et al., 2014). Individuals high in Machiavellianism were attracted by logical, assertive, conventional, and enterprising vocational themes. Those high in narcissism were attracted by expressive, assertive, conventional, enterprising, and communicative vocational themes. Individuals high on psychopathy were attracted by logical, inquiring, conventional, and enterprising vocational themes and disinterested in socialized and helping themes (Schneider et al., 2017). Others found that narcissism positively correlated with the artistic, social, STEM, and business interest factors. Machiavellianism negatively correlated with the social, applied, and work style factors. Psychopathy positively correlated with STEM and business interest factors and was negatively correlated with the social and work style factors (Kowalski et al., 2017).

Considering the aforementioned findings, we can see that those high in psychopathy and/or Machiavellianism prefer practical and agentic, active professions and avoid professions that involve prosociality and where empathy has an important role in the dynamic of work. Those high in narcissism prefer careers that involve getting the attention of others, and emotional expression, such as those in the arts and media. This makes sense, as from all the Dark Triad traits, narcissism is the only one that is not linked with fast life history strategies (Jonason et al., 2017). Contrary, those characterized by psychopathy and Machiavellianism try to satisfy their need of getting ahead with as little "attachment" and connection with others as possible.

The Dark Triad Traits and Career Success

The fact that individuals high on the Dark Triad traits prioritize social power (Jonason, Koehn, et al., 2020) can be seen, besides vocational choices, in outcomes such as career success and leadership or entrepreneurship attainment and efficacy. The Dark Triad provided incremental information beyond the Big Five when predicting salary and leadership positions (Paleczek et al., 2018). Regarding career success, individuals high in narcissism report more income than those high in Machiavellianism or psychopathy (Furnham & Treglown, 2021; Jonason et al., 2018; Spurk et al., 2016). Individuals high in narcissism reported higher incomes and career success, the relationships being mediated by occupational self-efficacy and career engagement (Hirschi & Jaensch, 2015).

This may be because others perceive narcissists as charismatic, which may help them to occupy important professional roles. Moreover, because they feel entitled and others perceive them as charismatic, they may be more likely to ask for income raises compared to Machiavellians or psychopaths. Also, narcissists are less antagonistic and callous relative to Machiavellians or psychopaths, and, therefore, they might form some attachment with others that, together with their charisma, may enhance their perceived dependability by others.

Individuals high in primary psychopathy report high levels of career success as well (Chiaburu et al., 2013). Interpersonal-affective psychopathic traits were related to higher annual incomes and were predictive of higher corporate ranks (Howe et al., 2014). Those high in fearless dominance (a dimension of psychopathy) held leadership positions in organizations (Lilienfeld et al., 2014). Individuals that were high in self-centered impulsivity reported low professional satisfaction, whereas fearless dominance was positively related to professional satisfaction and material success (Eisenbarth et al., 2018).

It may be that the components of psychopathy that imply planning and manipulating, such as fearless dominance, which characterize primary psychopathy (Miller et al., 2010), bring advantages in a career context (Eisenbarth et al., 2018), while

those that reflect fast life history strategies, such as self-centered impulsivity, may be detrimental to career success (Eisenbarth et al., 2018). Those that are high in Machiavellianism performed better when they perceived a lack of equipment or supplies; Kuyumcu & Dahling, 2014). It seems that the manifestations of fast life history strategies, such as self-centered impulsivity that may concretize in a getting against motive at work, are detrimental to career success in the long run, probably because cooperation is more important in a lifetime career than to be solely concerned with self-interest.

However, it is important to mention that this might be the case for those high in secondary psychopathy only. Those high in secondary psychopathy are impulsive, engage in risk-taking behaviors, are hostile, and lack long-term goals (Miller et al., 2010). Those high in primary psychopathy may be those labeled as successful psychopaths (Hall & Benning, 2006), since they are strongly oriented to getting ahead motive, but have the patience, planning, and vision necessary to pursue such long-term goals (Miller et al., 2010).

The Dark Triad Traits and Job Performance

Even if those high on the Dark Triad traits seek social power and prioritize professional life, this does not mean they are efficient employees. Moreover, career success may be obtained through a "hit-and-run" approach which does not necessarily involve being a performant employee. One of the most valued and expected criteria in employees is job performance, which represents achieving workplace goals (McLarty & Holt, 2019; O'Boyle et al., 2012). There are mixed findings regarding how efficient individuals high on the Dark Triad traits are, but some clear patterns can be derived from the existing knowledge. For instance, individuals high in Machiavellianism and/or psychopathy perform poorly on their daily job tasks, while those scoring high in narcissism are not necessarily perceived as low performers (O'Boyle et al., 2012).

Employees high in narcissism, Machiavellianism, and/or psychopathy reported low levels of task performance (McLarty & Holt, 2020). Narcissists tend to overestimate their actual performance, and their self-assessment is not related to objective performance measures (Guedes, 2017). Narcissism had an indirect impact on firm performance via top management team behavioral integration (Reina et al., 2014). Managers rated narcissistic and psychopathic employees as having poorer task performance and psychopathic employees as engaging in fewer cooperaive behaviors than employees low in those traits (Smith et al., 2016).

It seems that people with average levels of Machiavellianism are among the most cooperative and compliant with organizational norms, compared to those with lower and higher levels (Zettler & Solga, 2013). Individuals high on Machiavellianism reported high organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) beneficial to the organization and performance of in-role behaviors, but Machiavellianism was unrelated to OCBs beneficial to individuals (Szabo et al., 2018). In a variable-centered approach, the malevolent latent profile (high scores on all the Dark Triad traits) was associated with the highest job performance (Nguyen et al., 2020). Machiavellian employees who were also more socially skilled received higher performance ratings compared to Machiavellian employees with poor social skills, specifically in sensing the motivations and hidden agendas of others (Blickle et al., 2020). Machiavellians also perform better under conditions of high organizational constraints (e.g., cannot do the job because of a lack of equipment or supplies; Kuyumcu & Dahling, 2014). The Dark Triad predicted better task performance in athletes. In addition, mediation analyses indicated that the Dark Triad-performance relationship was explained by both hypercompetitive and self-developmental competitive orientations (Vaughan & Madigan, 2021).

It seems that those high in the Dark triad traits are, in general, poor performers in their jobs, except when the work context is highly competitive and when their social cognition skills are above average. Good performance of those high in the Dark Triad traits in competitive professional contexts may be explained by the fact that competitive environments require dominance and agency, which are specific to individuals high on those traits, as they are more likely to be oriented towards a fast life history strategies and are more familiar with the harshness that a competitive professional environment implies. Apart from competitive work settings, the job performance of people high on the Dark Triad traits remains poor, even when they manage to attain their desired occupational status. This leads us to believe that they achieve success not based on merit, but rather through deceit, exploitation and opportunism.

Machiavellianism correlated positively with burnout and its components (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and diminished personal accomplishment). The association between Machiavellianism and burnout appeared to be primarily driven by the depersonalization component of burnout (Mirkovic & Bianchi, 2019). Grover & Furnham (2021) found that individuals high in psychopathy and Machiavellianism reported high levels of burnout at work as well. The link between the darkness of personality and burnout may be explained by the fact that because of their fast life history strategy, these individuals put a lot of effort into fitting in an environment dominated by their slow life history counterparts (Mogilski et al., 2020). Furthermore, they try to conceal their intentions of deceiving and exploiting others in order to avoid being sanctioned. It is well-established that in modern societies, humans have developed ways to conserve social cohesion by controlling undesirable forms of social deviance, such as extreme aggressiveness and criminality (DeScioli & Kurzban, 2009; Mogilski et al., 2020).

The Dark Triad Traits and School Performance

If things seem rather clear between the relationship between the Dark Triad traits and job performance, the association between the Dark Triad traits and school performance, on the other hand, is less studied. However, we can still draw some tentative conclusions from this scarce research field.

It appears that self-report and teacher ratings of psychopathy tend to be negative predictors of reading performance (Vaughn et al., 2011). Narcissism does not appear to correlate with school achievement. However, subclinical narcissism seems to exert a significant positive indirect effect on school achievement through mental toughness (Papagiorgiu et al., 2018). Privately educated students tend to have, on average, higher Dark Triad trait scores than state-schooled students. There seems to be a negative relationship between the Dark Triad traits and intellectual humility, and this relationship tends to be stronger for privately schooled students (Cannon et al., 2020). In school-age children, narcissism is positively associated with theory of mind (TOM) abilities, whereas callous–unemotional traits like psychopathy are negatively associated with TOM, and impulsivity and Machiavellianism tend to be unrelated to TOM (Stellwagen & Kerig, 2013). It seems that narcissism might be the only trait from the Dark Triad that may positively impact academic achievement, and it might be understandable, considering that narcissists value social status more than Machiavellians and psychopaths (Kajonius et al., 2015) and academic achievement is a predictor of prospective social status. As such, a narcissist may be more conformist in his pursuit of achieving social power compared to Machiavellians and psychopaths, who try to achieve social power through cheating and opportunism. This is somewhat to be expected, considering that narcissists are more oriented towards slow life history strategies relative to Machiavellians and psychopaths (Jonason et al., 2017).

The Dark Triad Traits and Leadership

Management and leadership are among the most desirable positions for those that seek social power because executive roles imply authority over others. Of all the Dark Triad traits, narcissism seems the most important in the case of leadership efficacy (Paunonen et al., 2006), which is somehow implicit, considering that some narcissism measures include leadership as a component of narcissism (Raskin & Terry, 1988). Narcissism turned out to be the brightest Dark Triad trait, with benefits for subordinates' objective and subjective career success and no adverse effects on subordinates' well-being (Volmer et al., 2016). Narcissistic leaders have followers with objective and subjective career success and work engagement (Furnham & Treglown, 2021; Volmer et al., 2016). A positive relationship between employee narcissism and supervisor ratings of innovative employee behavior emerged. However, this effect was weakened by supervisor narcissism: only when supervisors themselves were less narcissistic did employee narcissism foster positive perceptions of employee innovative behavior (Wisse et al., 2015). Narcissists report high levels of leadership self-efficacy in self-report assessments (Furtner et al., 2011). However, the relationship between narcissism and leadership is far more complex and seems dependent on conditional characteristics and the type of leadership. For example, a high leader-member exchange renders narcissistic leaders to be less abusive (Lyons et al., 2019). Narcissistic leaders do not inspire, nor intellectually stimulate their employees (Greaves et al., 2013). Moreover, narcissistic leaders are perceived as ineffective and unethical by their employees (Blair et al., 2017; Hoffman et al., 2013). After controlling for general mental ability and emotional intelligence, narcissism and the wisdom dimension relativism of values and life priorities were negatively related to transformational leadership (Greaves et al., 2013). Whereas observer-reported leadership effectiveness ratings (e.g., supervisor report, subordinate report, and peer report) are not related to narcissism, self-reported leadership effectiveness ratings are positively related to narcissism (Grijalva et al., 2015).

These mixed findings may be explained by the fact that narcissistic leaders receive high leadership ratings during initial group formation, but not later (Ong et al., 2016). However, narcissists are perceived as charismatic at first impressions (Buffardi & Cambbell, 2008; Czarna et al., 2016). Moreover, narcissism seems related to leadership emergence, but not to leadership effectiveness (Grijalva et al., 2015), and there appears to be an optimal level of narcissism in terms of leadership effectiveness, where the most effective leaders are those that are averagely narcissistic (Grijalva et al., 2015). We can infer that narcissists are "fast" enough to pursue the getting ahead motive, but are also "kind" enough to satisfy the getting along motive to an important extent, as it is required by leadership positions, where social power has to be mixed together with communion to obtain good outcomes. However, this mix only takes place in certain professional situations, where the relationship between a narcissistic leader and a committed follower of that leader can exist.

There is a significant relationship between the Dark Triad traits and opportunistic decision-making (D'Souza & de Lima, 2015). Data from 92 independent samples showed a weak positive correlation between psychopathic tendencies and leadership emergence, a weak negative association between psychopathic tendencies and leadership effectiveness, and a moderate negative correlation between psychopathic tendencies and transformational leadership (Landay et al., 2019). A four-factor structure of psychopathy positively correlated with passive leadership behavior, namely passive-management-by-exception and *laissez-faire*, but negatively correlated with individual consideration (Westerlaken & Woods, 2013). Highly psychopathic leaders display passive leadership, namely, passive-management-by-exception, which means they avoid taking action until problems can no longer be ignored, *laissez-faire* (i.e., no leadership), but they also seldom provide feedback to their employees (Landay et al., 2019; Mathieu et al., 2014). In the case of highly Machiavellian and/or psychopathic leaders, their employees report low career success, job satisfaction, well-being, and high burnout (Basar, 2020; Mathieu et al., 2015; Volmer et al., 2016). As in the case of

narcissism, psychopathic leaders are perceived as good leaders by their employees, but they are mostly ineffective (Landay et al., 2019).

Machiavellianism and psychopathy have detrimental effects on subordinates' career success and well-being (Volmer et al., 2016). Supervisor Machiavellianism is positively related to abusive supervision in work teams, but only when supervisors perceive their power to be high rather than low (Wise & Sleebos, 2016). Machiavellian and/or psychopathic leaders reported low levels of corporate social responsibility (Myung & Choi, 2017).

While some beneficial effects of narcissism on leadership behavior are to be expected, it seems clear that Machiavellianism and psychopathy are detrimental to leadership effectiveness. Compared to narcissists, Machiavellians or psychopaths are too "fast" and less "kind" (McDonald et al., 2012) to be effective leaders. This idea is supported by the fact that psychopaths and Machiavellians adopt hard manipulation tactics (e.g., threats), whereas narcissists use soft manipulation tactics (e.g., offering compliments), which may be more effective long term in modern workplaces (Jonason et al., 2012). Therefore, psychopaths and Machiavellians are more oriented to getting ahead by getting against, whereas those high in narcissism value more the getting along motive, reflecting the fact that Machiavellianism and psychopathy are stronger correlates of fast life history strategies relaive to narcissism (Jonason et al., 2017).

The Dark Triad Traits and "Bad Apples"

Individuals high on the Dark Triad traits are not only poor performers in some professional contexts, but they also seem counterproductive, as they engage in many counterproductive work behaviors (CWBs; DeShong et al., 2015; O'Boyle et al., 2012; Pan et al., 2018) ranging from interpersonal deviance at work to incivility, or cyberbullying (Min et al., 2019).

However, when individuals high on the Dark Triad traits perceive high organizational support and justice and have strong organizational commitment, they commit fewer CWBs (Ying & Cohen, 2018; Palmer et al., 2017). Also, the Dark Triad traits seem to have an indirect effect on CWBs through perceptions of organizational policies (Baloch et al., 2017). People with high scores on the Dark Triad traits engage in unethical behaviors not only as employees, but also during their educational training. Machiavellian and narcissistic students are prone to and seem to engage frequently in academic cheating (e.g., exam fraud and plagiarism; Barbaranelli et al., 2018; Cheung & Egan, 2020; Ternes et al., 2019; Turnipseed & Landay, 2018). Only extraversion and psychopathy remained significant correlates of academic cheating in Chinese students after controlling for age and gender (Zhang et al., 2019). Machiavellianism and, to a lesser extent, narcissism, predicted both positive attitudes towards academic incivilities and the frequency of observations of incivilities (Turnipseed & Landy, 2018). When controlling for impulsivity, psychopathy was the only Dark Triad trait associated with academic misconduct. When primary psychopathy and secondary psychopathy were considered, only primary psychopathy was associated with academic misconduct (Ternes et al., 2019). Triarchic psychopathy added incremental variance in explaining academic cheating after controlling for honesty-humility (Ljubin-Golub et al., 2020). Other authors found that psychopathy emerged as the strongest significant predictor of academic cheating (Cheung & Egan, 2020).

It may be that individuals high on the Dark Triad traits engage in CWBs and academic cheating because of their fast life history strategies, which compels them to violate the norms of social exchange and try to extract as many resources as possible from others as a means to compensate for the scarcity they experienced during their childhood (O'Boyle et al., 2012), thus reflecting their getting ahead orientation detrimental to getting along. It is also important to note that this exploitative pattern of relating to others can be seen in those high in the Dark Triad traits since adolescence, which further supports our conjecture that childhood experiences is an essential determinant of their fast life history strategies.

The Dark Triad Traits and Other Organizational Behaviors, Attitude and Dynamics

Besides the aforementioned points regarding the workplace and careers dynamics, there are other features that may inform us about how those high in the Dark Triad traits adapt to their workplace, such as job satisfaction, work engagement, boredom, or organizational climate and values. Even if this topic is relatively new, it provides important findings that are worth discussing. Of all the Dark Triad traits, only narcissism is positively linked to work engagement (Furnham & Treglown, 2021). Psychopaths and Machiavellians perceived their workplaces as competitive, whereas narcissists perceived their workplaces as prestigious and lenient. Machiavellians, in particular, reported low job satisfaction (Jonason et al., 2015). Narcissism was positively related to seeking social job resources and work challenges, whereas psychopathy was negatively related to seeking social resources (Roczniewska & Bakker, 2016).

Unsurprisngly, the Dark Triad traits were also related to competitiveness (Spurk & Hirschi, 2018). The Dark Triad traits are more closely related to external sources of motivation (especially instrumental motivation), which are, in turn, partly associated with higher levels of burnout (Prusik & Szulawski, 2019). Individuals high in narcissism, Machiavellianism, or psychopathy reported high levels of boredom at work (Oprea et al., 2019). Those high in narcissism, Machiavellianism, or psychopathy reported low levels of OCBs (Webster & Smith, 2019).

Overall, it can be argued that those high in Machiavellianism and psychopathy perceive their working environments in a negative light, which fuels their cynicism and antagonism, as shown by their low work engagement, low OCBs, perceived competitiveness, and the avoidance of seeking social resources at their jobs. Contrary, narcissists seem to pursue the getting

ahead motive in a milder and "gentle way," as they are more engaged in their work and use social resources at their jobs. This is somewhat expected, as narcissism like to be praised, admired, and validated by others (Campbell & Foster, 2002).

Future Research Directions

In this research, we aimed to identify patterns of adaptive or maladaptive behavior that dark personalities manifest in their professional life by reviewing the literature on the Dark Triad traits in the workplace from an evolutionary and socio-analytical theoretical understanding. Unfortunately, as to date, we are limited to the Dark Triad traits, since it is the most used operational model of "dark" personalities. However, the "darkness" of personality goes beyond the Dark Triad traits (Mededovic & Petrovic, 2015). New traits that offer incremental validity were identified, such as sadism (Paulhus et al., 2021) and spitefulness (Marcus et al., 2014). Future research which aims to understand dark personalities at work should look at these distinct traits as well.

We used life history theory (LHT) as the main theoretical framework to explain the predatory and exploitative behaviors of dark personalities at work and to signal their adaptive nature at the individual level. Nevertheless, the application of LHT in humans is not without criticism. Recently, a distinction has been made between LHT from an evolutionary biological perspective (LHT-E) and from an evolutionary psychological perspective (LHT-P; Nettle & Frankenhuis, 2020). LHT-P concerns the measurement of covariation across individuals of multiple psychological traits; the proximate goals they serve, and their relation to childhood experience. LHT-E, on the other hand, gravitates around the evolutionary explanations – namely why did natural selection shape the divergent evolution of populations or species under different ecologies the way it did. In order to increase internal validity, future research which aims to understand organizational behavior from an adaptationist perspective should make this distinction clear in the operationalization of LHS at the measurement level by specifying which evolutionary approach was taken into account.

Lastly, most of the research we reviewed was conducted on WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic) people. Considering that the majority of the world population is not WEIRD (Henrich et al., 2010), future research should use data from non-WEIRD populations to test the generalizability of our conclusions. LHS and Dark Triad traits may manifest differently in Western and non-Western societies, as those living in more competitive societies, like Turkey, are better characterized by the Dark Triad traits than those who live in less competitive societies, like Australia (Jonason et al., 2019); being more agentic should serve adaptive goals in competitive spaces.

Conclusion

We reviewed the most well-known topics in the field of organizational psychology in relation to the Dark Triad traits. As discussed, Machiavellianism, narcissism and psychopathy are associated mostly with undesirable outcomes at the organizational level (i.e., poor job performance), but often with desirable outcomes (i.e., leadership attainment and efficacy, career success) for people high on those traits. As such, they are worth further consideration by researchers and practitioners in I-O psychology in order to improve our understanding of how individual differences in personality impact organizational life. However, organizational life is complex, and future research should also consider other workplace behavioral criteria when investigating how people with dark personalities adapt to their workplace, such as organizational culture and climate, person-organization fit, and psychological capital, but also how the Dark Triad traits relate to other psychological factors, such as cognitive skills and other personality traits, in predicting different organizational outcomes.

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