



Dark Triad, counterproductive work behaviour and job performance

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 20-June-2021

Accepted 25-October-2021

Available online 01-November-2021

This article should be cited as: Crosman, M. I. (2021). Dark Triad, counterproductive work behavior and job performance. *Studia Doctoralia. Psychology and Educational Science*, 12(2), 110-122. <https://doi.org/10.47040/sdpsych.v12i2.134>

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ABSTRACT

Dark personality traits are also known as the dark triad which is a multidimensional construct, made up of Machiavellianism, narcissism and psychopathy. They have recently become a major topic of interest in organizational psychology. The present research aims to demonstrate that the dark triad of personality is a significant negative predictor of job performance and studies the relationship between the dark triad and job performance, having as a mediator counterproductive work behavior. The sample of this study is represented by 137 participants from different organizations with different ages and different work experience ranging from one to 40 years, of which 34 men (24.82%) and 103 women (75.18%). The design adopted is cross-sectional, descriptive, correlational, non-experimental. In this paper each construct of the triad was taken separately and measured in relation to the other two variables mentioned above, and the results varied depending on this aspect. Thus, only one of the two major hypotheses was supported.

Keywords: Dark Triad, job performance, counterproductive work behavior

1. INTRODUCTION

Dark triad of personality is a three-dimensional construct, consisting of Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy. They have a number of common traits, such as manipulateness, risk-taking, and low affectivity. The three constructs were studied both separately and together. Work performance is a topic studied for a long time, it is also considered to have several dimensions. However, two of them became more prominent and were studied extensively,

namely contextual performance and task performance. Counterproductive work behavior at work is also often seen as a third facet of performance, but there have been numerous studies that have approached it separately, even in contrast to the other two. The interest of organizational psychology in dark personality traits has increased in the last years from the desire to reduce counterproductive work behaviors within organizations. The domain of

organizational research is vast, but only recently has it begun to develop and address current issues, such as the one mentioned above. This has aroused both interest in researchers and managers and company directors in terms of managing occupational health and human resources processes. The effects of accentuated personality traits are felt both in the way tasks are performed and in the way employees behave and especially in how they manage stressful situations. The way in which employees carry out their duties can affect to a small or large extent the socio-economic context.

This study aims to eliminate some gaps in research on counterproductive work behavior and work performance and also to bring a number of quantifiable results for organizational perception in relation to the less positive side of organizational psychology.

Dark Triad of personality

Accentuated personality traits or the dark triad refer to the three interdependent constructs Machiavellianism, narcissism and psychopathy, which, from an empirical point of view, have stood out over time. Despite the different origins, in the clinical literature it has been observed that they are sharing a number of characteristics. Thus, to some extent each of them involves tendencies of self-promotion, emotional distancing, duplicity and aggression (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). The three constructs correlate with each other both separately and together (Jakobwitz & Egan, 2006).

The term "Machiavellianism" comes from Niccolo Machiavelli, a political adviser of the famous Italian Medici family. The *motto* he promoted throughout his life was "the end justifies the means". According to him, a leader with a clear plan should be open to any effective strategy, even if it involves interpersonal tactics such as manipulation, flattery or lying (Jones & Paulhus, 2009). According to Christie and Geis (2013), the definition of a Machiavellian is a person who manipulates others for his own purposes. People who clearly present a Machiavellian orientation do not attach much importance to conventional morality, being more prone to mind and cheating when they have such an opportunity (Cooper & Peterson, 1980). Although Machiavelli wrote for sixteenth-century Italian political leaders, many analysts believe his ideas are applicable to even modern business managers, and some writers openly support Machiavellian tactics for the top executive who wants to stay in power (Hunt & Chonko, 1984).

Narcissists have some imbalance in self-image, as the association with their self-esteem varies depending on various factors (Campbell et al., 2007). Narcissists generally have a lower need for intimacy (Carroll, 1987) and empathy (Watson et al., 1992). Interest in narcissism has increased since the 1970s, when three major trends emerged. The first of them refers to narcissism as a cultural entity, the effective

society having more and more accentuated narcissistic tendencies. Its implications include increasing the potential for social conflict based on racism, sexism and nationalism. One explanation for these behaviors may be that the individual thus satisfies his own narcissistic desires for group membership and identification with its members. A second trend is the "self-service bias", which refers to starting people to take responsibility for good results and to deny guilt for failures. The third trend focuses on narcissism as a clinical entity (Emmons, 1987). Kohut (1966) states that there are various forms of narcissism that must be considered not only as precursors of objective love, but also as independent psychological constellations, whose development and functionality deserve to be examined and evaluated separately. Although great interest has been given to narcissism, its empirical research has lagged far behind, so there is no evidence that over time the prevalence of narcissism has increased or simply narcissists have become more visible (Dervin, 1982).

Psychopathy is a clinical construct defined by a number of interpersonal, affective, and behavioral characteristics, including egocentrism, deception, manipulation, irresponsibility, impulsivity, seeking stimulation, and a range of antisocial behaviors, not necessarily criminal (Neumann & Hare, 2008). Those with this disorder are often described by the media as vile, inhuman and qualitatively different from other individuals. Psychopathy is considered to be a three-dimensional constellation of personality: it approaches an arrogant and deceptive interpersonal style (for example lies, manipulates, and abuses a superficial charm), has a poor emotional experience (for example lack of guilt, and remorse, it is affected only on the surface and shows insensitivity), and has an impulsive and irresponsible behavioral style (it is impulsive and seeks sensations that arouse his enthusiasm) (van Baardewijk et al., 2008). These characteristics seem to be hereditary, as they begin to manifest in early childhood and are relatively stable during adolescence and into adulthood (Neumann & Hare, 2008). Lilienfeld (2013) conceptualizes psychopathy as a "condition of interpersonal impact". Neumann et al. (2005) found that the features of psychopathy are significantly related to a number of external interdependencies, the most relevant being violent behavior. One of the major challenges in trying to elucidate the structure of the psychopathic construct is the fact that being a latent construct, it is not directly observable. Over time, studies of psychopathy have been quite chaotic, with researchers often using definitions and measurements that were not necessarily related to each other, their confidence and validity being uncertain. However, several recent longitudinal studies have shown that psychopathic traits are moderately stable during development (Hare & Neumann, 2008). In recent years, there has been an explosion of research on this personality disorder. Although several researchers have focused on the etiology,

manifestations, and treatments, there is also a large body of research that focuses on violent and criminal behavior influenced by psychopathy (Skeem & Cooke, 2010).

Job performance

Workplace or job performance is one of the most studied variables in research on organizational behavior and human resource management (Bommer et al., 1995). The literature has defined job performance in terms of actions and behaviors rather than their outcomes, focusing on employees attitudes that affect the organization's goals. Based on this idea, performance can be defined as a behavior of the individual that contributes to the goals of the organization (Rotundo & Sackett, 2002).

It has often been treated as a one-dimensional construct (Hunt, 1996), but its conceptualization has been expanded in recent years, divided into task performance, contextual performance, and counterproductive performance. Task performance refers to the basic tasks, specific to each job. Contextual performance refers to those voluntary behaviors of employees, done in addition to their main tasks, such as, for example, helping colleagues. The third dimension is counterproductive performance and refers to behaviors that employees engage in to intentionally destroy the well-being of the organization (Ng & Feldman, 2010).

The first two actively promote and strengthen the effectiveness of the organization and we will continue to focus on them. Although both contribute to organizational effectiveness, Borman and Motowidlo (1993) noted three major differences between them. First, performance-related behaviors in work vary considerably across each job, while contextual behaviors are usually consistent everywhere. Another difference between the two is the fact that for the task performance the tasks are very specific depending on the role that the employee has at work. Also, antecedents of task performance are more likely to be related to cognitive abilities, while contextual performance is more likely to involve personality-related variables.

Counterproductive work behaviour

According to Spector and Fox (2005) counterproductive work behavior in the workplace is a harmful construct for the organization and everything related to it, from the work colleagues, managers and customers. This behavior involves aggression, a harmful act, generally addressed more to people than to the organization itself (Bruursema et al., 2011). Spector et al. (2010) state that there are five dimensions of this construct, each of which has different correlations with other variables. Worker abuse, whether physical or mental, represents one of these dimensions and can range from ignoring to intentionally hurting someone. Another side of the construct is deviant production, which is to intentionally impede the efficiency of the tasks. A concrete example can be delayed tasks with urgent deadlines.

Sabotage is a third dimension of counterproductive work behavior, which refers to the intentional destruction of materials in the workplace. And withdrawal is part of these facets and consists in reducing working time without the consent of superiors. The last in this category is theft, which is the appropriation of the assets of the organization or colleagues without any approval. Bruursema et al. (2011) added a sixth dimension of the construct, called "horse game". This refers to behavior that aims to waste time and resources of colleagues and the organization through various relaxation activities. A concrete example to better understand this concept could be using the computer from work for games or for watching movies, or doing other activities that are not related to the job. Gossip or wandering jokes can also fall into the same category as they seem funny at first, but can affect the work. The main feature of counterproductive work behavior is that the harmful act itself must be performed intentionally, not accidentally (Spector & Fox, 2005).

Employees who have the possibility to express dissatisfaction with unfavorable treatment or file a complaint with a top-level manager are less likely to engage in such behavior (Beauregard, 2014). With lower levels of functional interdependence being appropriate, managers and team leaders could facilitate face-to-face interaction between employees and share individual tasks and work achievements. Moreover, they could discuss and highlight how each individual's contribution adds to the organizational goal, both directly and indirectly. Such conversations can help alleviate counterproductive work behaviors (Priesemuth et al., 2013).

The role of Dark Triad of personality in job performance

Studies have not focused much on the relationship between accentuated personality traits and workplace performance, as Big Five traits received a greater interest from the researchers. In general, the link between the dark triad and workplace behavior is rather a test, with a substantial number of negative and null results (O'Boyle et al., 2012).

Numerous research in both psychology and other fields such as marketing, economics or accounting has suggested that there is a link between Machiavellianism and workplace behavior, the relationship between the two being expressed both positively and negatively. For example, when it comes to successfully dealing with contemporary problems in organizational life and therefore increasing work performance, Machiavellianism can be useful to some extent through behaviors such as securing the interests of partners in negotiations or self-promotion. Skills and achievements can also demonstrate strategic behaviors to appear in a good light, increasing in this case performance (Zettler & Solga, 2013). These benefits are, however,

diminished by other features of this construct. Becker and O'Hair (2007) show that there is also a negative association between Machiavellianism and contextual performance. For example, Machiavellians tend to be perceived as abusive by subordinates, exhibiting a general lack of affection in relationships and striving to control each interaction (Kiazad et al., 2010). He uses manipulative behaviors to focus on maintaining its power (Kessler et al., 2010). However, if an individual relies on interpersonal manipulation but does not have enough of this ability, colleagues, subordinates and superiors will notice this attempt and therefore the relationship with the organization will be rather weakened, as individuals find it difficult to accept the lack of equity (O'Boyle et al., 2012).

Also, in the case of narcissism, the searches generated mixed conclusions. From the point of view of some researchers, this is detrimental to performance. Others have concluded that there is a side of the narcissism that brings positive results. Also, numerous studies have found there is no relationship between the two (Guedes, 2017). On the one hand, narcissism has been shown to have a negative influence on job performance. Characteristics such as hypercompetitiveness or the need for superiority result in poor performance (O'Boyle et al., 2012). Narcissism has also been correlated with the lack of ethics in the behavior of company executives and the need for power (Jonason et al., 2012). A narcissist needs to perceive colleagues as inferior. Thus, if they provoke it, the result is conflict and implicitly low performance (Smith et al., 2016). Narcissists are attracted to leadership positions and are often found in higher positions because they fit them best (Guedes, 2017). Traditionally, leadership is an aspect of workplace performance that includes explicit responsibility for the performance of an organizational team (Judge et al., 2006). They often engage in behavior that poses threats to performance. They often tend to take risks, many of them unnecessary, and this is not very beneficial in a group (Smith et al., 2016). Wales et al. (2013) concluded that narcissism alone is not enough to explain the level of performance, but it certainly plays an important role.

As with the other two constructs, some individuals with psychopathic tendencies thrive in the organizational realm, especially if their work requires a rational, emotion-free behavioral style. In some cases the features of psychopathy are consistent with the organization's mission and vision (O'Boyle et al., 2012). Subclinical psychopathy has a very relevant contribution in predicting behaviors related to contextual performance in the workplace, representing an important negative predictor (Szabó et al., 2018). This was significantly and positively correlated with engaging in unethical behavior, and this relationship was mediated by moral non-involvement (Smith & Lilienfeld, 2013). Individuals with a tendency to psychopathy are not concerned with fulfilling social obligations and adhering to

the rules of reciprocity (O'Boyle et al., 2012). They ignore high expectations about task effectiveness, which obviously negatively influence performance (Smith et al., 2016). They are often driven by a strong desire to stand out and they do so without taking into account the unpleasant consequences they may attract because of this (Blickle & Schütte, 2017). Traits of psychopathy such as lack of honesty or manipulateness present predictors for potential negative implications in the work environment (Smith & Lilienfeld, 2013). Schütte et al. (2018) state that psychopathy is positively correlated with interpersonal deviance and negatively correlated with contextual performance.

The role of Dark Triad of personality in counterproductive work behaviour

Despite the emphasis of positive psychology on the integrity and strength of character of individuals, studies on counterproductive work behavior at work pay attention to the dark side of human nature. Thus, accentuated personality traits may be predictors of deviant behavior in the organizational environment (O'Boyle et al., 2012).

Machiavellianism, for example, is associated with many immoral and unethical behaviors that go beyond conventional limits. To achieve their goals, Machiavellians tend to resort to antisocial behavior, exploit others or even commit fraud (Mahmood et al., 2021). Giacalone and Knouse (2001) reported that Machiavellians are more likely to engage in counterproductive work behaviors such as abuse, theft, and sabotage. However, other researchers have found that Machiavellians who are concerned with maintaining their power in an organization are more aware and less likely to engage in such behaviors (Kessler et al., 2010). A person with high scores on Machiavellianism will also exercise control over the information provided to change the general perception of the public so that it serves for its own purpose. Specifically, it is likely that a leader with a high Machiavellian personality will use subordinates as scapegoats and take advantage of their loyalty to come out smoothly in various situations (Amir & Malik, 2016). Those with high scores on the Dark Triad can also conclude certain alliances to compensate for the work in front of others. For example, exchanging favors and jokes can create friends at work, which could later be exploited to compensate for work obligations (Jonason et al., 2012). To manage the behavior of Machiavellians in the workplace, Amir and Malik (2016) recommend organizations to have a carefully developed reward system that encourages and rewards people who follow organizational rules and exhibit useful and ethical behavior.

Just like Machiavellians, narcissistic personalities use manipulative tactics when involved in relationships with others and tend to dominate and exploit others. Narcissists are people with high self-esteem, making them vulnerable to ego threats (Mahmood et al., 2021). Spector (2010) argues

that their increased sensitivity to criticism and the threat of the ego would make them more likely to experience anger and thus to engage in counterproductive work behaviors. Narcissism has the weakest correlation with the aggressiveness among the three constructs of the triad (Jonason et al., 2012). O'Boyle et al. (2012) also found that the relationship between narcissism and counterproductive work behavior is somewhat weaker in collectivist cultures. Individuals with a high level of narcissism often engage in behaviors such as embezzlement, aggression, and nonviolent crime (DeShong et al., 2015). Narcissists tend to perceive themselves as victims, read negative intention during interpersonal interactions, and therefore have an increased sensitivity to negative interactions. These tendencies may lead them to be more likely to engage in counterproductive work behaviors, such as hostility, obstructionism, or overt aggression toward other individuals (Wu & Lebreton, 2011).

Like the other two constructs, psychopathy can also represent an advantage in businesses, corporations or other occupations that require a rational behavioral style, without emotions and the desire to achieve their goals even at the risk of harming others. However, lack of empathy and erratic behavior make those with high levels of psychopathy undesirable employees (O'Boyle et al., 2012). This construct has been associated with more violent, aggressive and dangerous acts than the other two (DeShong et al., 2015). Research has suggested that individuals with psychopathic disorders not only gain satisfaction from harming others, they also use this behavior as a tactic to achieve their own goals (Wu & Lebreton, 2011). Their low affectivity means that they are less likely to be concerned about other people or to feel a sense of loyalty to their employer (O'Boyle et al., 2012). They also believe that rules and regulations do not apply to them and do not take responsibility for their actions (Boddy, 2006). Individuals with high psychopathy do not carefully process what is happening around them and do not take into account the consequences, this leading them to engage more often in counterproductive work behaviors. Also, the fact that they like to take risks and feel guilt to a very small extent or not at all also encourages such behaviors (Wu & Lebreton, 2011). Psychopathy is characterized by dysfunctional cognitive-affective patterns in the context of work, which translate into counterproductive work behaviors (Schilbach et al., 2020).

Taking into account the above, we establish the following hypotheses:

H1. *Dark triad of personality is a significant negative predictor for job performance.*

H1a. *Machiavellianism is a significant negative predictor for task performance.*

H1b. *Machiavellianism is a significant negative predictor for contextual performance.*

H1c. *Narcissism is a significant negative predictor for task performance.*

H1d. *Narcissism is a significant negative predictor for contextual performance.*

H1e. *Psychopathy is a significant negative predictor for task performance.*

H1f. *Psychopathy is a significant negative predictor for contextual performance.*

The relationship between counterproductive work behaviour and job performance

As mentioned earlier, Borman and Motowidlo (1993) state that there are two facets of work performance, namely contextual performance and task performance. We also recall that counterproductive work behavior is often taken as a third facet of job performance (Sackett, 2002).

At present, no studies have been found to show that there is a concrete link between counterproductive work behavior and task performance. Instead, research has focused on the more obvious link between counterproductive work behavior and contextual performance. These two constructs represent forms of extra-task behavior that are often considered opposite, this suggests that factors that lead to high levels of one lead to low levels of the other (Spector & Fox, 2002). However, Hafidz et al. (2012) have shown that contextual performance and counterproductive work behavior are separate but related constructs, so that a person can engage in both behaviors at the same time. Spector and Fox (2002) state that emotional states can be predictors of both counterproductive work behavior and contextual performance. Thus, positive feelings have been associated with contextual performance, as when individuals feel good they tend to be more selfless and engage in more voluntary acts to maintain their well-being. By default, when they have negative emotions, they tend to withdraw.

Another predictor of the two is working conditions, which often force employees to take on extra tasks to maintain high performance, such as getting involved in informal activities to motivate, finding alternative ways to work, learn or develop their skills. However, they can sometimes lead to anger or frustration behaviors associated with counterproductivity. Miles et al. (2002) demonstrated that these organizational constraints relate positively to both constructs. Therefore, engaging too much in voluntary work can lead to the perception of injustice, interpersonal conflict, overload or even burnout, thus actually increasing stress and thus counterproductive work behavior (Sackett, 2002). It is recommended that organizations find a way to encourage their employees to engage in behaviors that increase contextual performance and, at the same time, find ways to stop them from counterproductive work behaviors (Hafidz et al., 2012).

Given the information presented, we can establish the following hypothesis:

H2. *Counterproductive work behaviour mediates the relationship between Dark personality traits and job performance.*

2. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to analyze the relationships between the dark triad of personality, counterproductive work behavior and performance at work.

Participants and procedure

The present study involved 137 people aged between 20 and 58 years, $M = 30.09$, $SD = 9.66$, with a length of service between one and 46 years, $M = 8.74$, $SD = 8.50$, 34 men (24.82%) and 103 women (75.18%). Of these, eight declare that they have a below average salary (5.8%), 73 declare an average salary (53.28%), 30 a slightly above average salary (21.90%), and 26 a high salary (19.02 %). Depending on the field of activity, six people work in the social field (4.4%), three people in the artistic field (2.2%), 79 work in the field of services (57.66%), 30 in the economic field (21.90%), and 19 work in the technical field (13.84%), and in the occupied position 106 persons hold executive positions (77.37%), and 31 hold management positions (22.63%). Depending on the size of the company, 25 participants work in companies with less than ten employees (18.25%), 43 in companies with 11-50 employees (31.39%), 16 in companies with 51-100 employees (11.68%), and 53 in companies with over 100 employees (38.68%).

The design of this study is cross-sectional, descriptive, correlational, non-experimental. Data for investigating statistical hypotheses were collected in March - April 2021, participants were contacted through the social network Facebook in order to be redirected to the online platform Google Forms to make it possible to complete the questionnaire. They were given a description of the purpose of the research and were informed that all data are used for academic purposes, thus expressing their agreement to participate and process personal data. The method used was that of the "snowball", the participants being asked to send the link of the questionnaire to other people after completion.

3. RESULTS

Descriptive statistics

The IBM SPSS 24 statistical analysis program (IBM Corp, 2016) and the jamovi medmod module (The jamovi project, 2021) were used to organize the data and test the hypotheses.

H2a. *Counterproductive work behaviour mediates the relationship between Dark personality traits and task performance.*

H2b. *Counterproductive behaviour mediates the relationship between Dark personality traits and contextual performance.*

Instruments

Dark triad of personality. The accentuated personality traits were measured with The Short Dark Triad (SD3) (Jones & Paulhus, 2014), the Romanian version being translated by Dragoş Iliescu. Over time it has undergone changes for various reasons, but currently SD3 has 27 items that measure the three dimensions of the Dark Triad, each of which is assigned two items. According to the two authors (Jones & Paulhus, 2014), the titles of the subscales were removed, namely "Machiavellianism", "Narcissism", "Psychopathy", but the items were kept in their original order. The instrument is a self-report type, and the measurement is on a Likert scale, where 1 = strong disagreement, and 5 = strong agreement.

Counterproductive work behavior was measured with Counterproductive Work Behavior Checklist (CWB-C, 10-item version) (Spector et al., 2010), translated into Romanian by Dragoş Iliescu and Coralia Sulea. As the name suggests, the instrument comprises a total of 10 items, half of them measuring the counterproductive work behavior towards the organization, and the other half the behavior towards people (colleagues, customers). The instrument is a self-report type, and the measurement scale is on a Likert scale, where 1 = never, and 5 = daily.

Job performance was measured with Goodman & Svyantek's Performance Scale (Goodman & Svyantek, 1999), which was translated into Romanian by Dragoş Iliescu. This questionnaire has a total of 16 items, alternating between contextual performance (7 items) and task performance (9 items). The instrument is a self-report type, and the measurement is on a Likert scale, where 1 = strong disagreement, and 4 = strong agreement.

Means, standard deviations, Cronbach Alpha coefficients, and Pearson correlations among variables are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. *Descriptive statistics*

	M	AS	α	MAC	NAR	PSY	TP	CP	CWB
MAC	26.53	6.96	.82	1					
NAR	26.21	5.41	.68	.46**	1				
PSY	17.06	6.16	.79	.67**	.45**	1			
TP	31.36	4.04	.84	-.07	.14	-.05	1		
CP	23.36	3.53	.80	-.12	.01	-.17	.44**	1	
CWB	18.23	5.86	.81	.31**	.25**	.52**	-.17*	-.23**	1

** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

MAC – Machiavellianism, NAR – Narcissism, PSY – Psychopathy, TP – Task performance, CP – Contextual performance, CWB – Counterproductive work behavior

It is observed that the scores for the three accentuated personality traits are relatively low, thus, for Machiavellianism $M = 27.53$, $SD = 6.96$, for narcissism $M = 26.21$, $SD = 5.41$, and for psychopathy $M = 17.06$, $SD = 6.16$. The scores for work performance are above average, respectively for the task performance $M = 31.36$, $SD = 4.04$, and for the contextual performance $M = 23.36$, $SD = 3.53$. Regarding the counterproductive work behavior, the scores are very low, $M = 18.23$, $SD = 5.86$.

Skewness and kurtosis are in the range $(-1, 1)$, which shows a normal data distribution.

Hypotheses testing

H1. *Dark triad of personality is a significant negative predictor for job performance.*

H1a. *Machiavellianism is a significant negative predictor for task performance.*

H1b. *Machiavellianism is a significant negative predictor for contextual performance.*

H1c. *Narcissism is a significant negative predictor for task performance.*

H1d. *Narcissism is a significant negative predictor for contextual performance.*

H1e. *Psychopathy is a significant negative predictor for task performance.*

H1f. *Psychopathy is a significant negative predictor for contextual performance.*

To test these hypotheses, two multiple linear regression analyzes were performed having as predictors the three dimensions of the Dark Triad (Machiavellianism, narcissism, psychopathy) and as dependent variables, alternatively, task performance and contextual performance.

Table 2. *Multiple linear regression analysis for dark triad as predictors of task performance*

Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients		Sig.
		B	ES	Beta	t	
1	(Constant)	29.65	1.81		16.37	.00
	Machiavelism	-.07	.07	-.13	-1.08	.28
	Narcissism	.17	.07	.22	2.27	.03
	Psychopathy	-.04	.08	-.06	-.51	.61

Dependent variable: Task performance

$R^2 = .04$

It is observed that the three dimensions of the Dark Triad are responsible for only 4.2% of task performance variance, but the regression equation is statistically insignificant, $F(3, 133) = 1.93$, $p > .05$. Of the three dimensions of the Dark Triad,

narcissism is positively associated with task performance, $\beta = .22$, $p < .5$.

Taking into account this result we can say that hypotheses H1a, H1c, H1e are not supported by the analyzed data.

Table 3. Multiple linear regression analysis for dark triad as predictors of contextual performance

Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients		t	Sig.
		B	ES	Beta			
1	(Constant)	24.04	1.59			15.15	.00
	Machiavelism	-.01	.06	-.03		-.21	.83
	Narcissism	.06	.06	.09		.95	.35
	Psychopathy	-.11	.07	-.20		-1.67	.10

Dependent variable: Contextual performance

R₂ = .04

It is observed that the three dimensions of the Dark Triad are responsible for only 3.6% of contextual performance variance, the regression equation being statistically insignificant, $F(3, 133) = 1.65$, $p > .05$. None of the three dimensions of the Dark Triad are associated with contextual performance.

Taking into account this result we can say that the hypotheses H1b, H1d, H1f are not supported by the analyzed data.

H2. *Counterproductive work behaviour mediates the relationship between Dark personality traits and job performance.*

H2a. *Counterproductive work behaviour mediates the relationship between Dark personality traits and task performance.*

H2b. *Counterproductive work behaviour mediates the relationship between Dark personality traits and contextual performance.*

In order to test these hypotheses, two mediation analyzes were performed having as predictor the Dark Triad (calculated as the sum of the dimensions Machiavellianism, narcissism and psychopathy), as dependent variables, alternatively, task performance and contextual performance and as a mediating variable counterproductive work behavior.

Table 4. Mediation estimates for counterproductive work behaviour in the relationship between Dark Triad and task performance

Effect	Label	Estimate	SE	95% CI		Z	p	% Mediation
				Lower	Upper			
Indirect	a × b	-.02	.01	-.05	-.01	-2.09	.036	49.97
Direct	c	.02	.02	-.02	.07	.99	.324	50.03
Total	c + a × b	.01	.02	-.04	.04	.00	.999	100.00

Table 5. Path analysis for counterproductive work behaviour in the relationship between Dark Triad and task performance

				95% CI		Z	p		
				SE	Lower			Upper	
DT	→	CWB	a	.17	.03	.11	.22	5.70	< .001
CWB	→	TP	b	-.14	.06	-.27	-.02	-2.25	.024
DT	→	TP	c	.02	.02	-.02	.07	.99	.324

DT – Dark triad, CWB – Counterproductive work behaviour, TP – Task performance

It is observed that the counterproductive work behavior mediates the relationship between the Dark Triad and task

performance, the mediation percentage being 49.97%, and the mediation estimate $\beta = -.02$, CI95% (-.05, -.01), $Z = -$

2.09, $p < .05$. The Dark Triad is positively associated with counterproductive work behavior, $\beta = .17$, CI95% (.11, .22), $Z = 5.70$, $p < .01$, and in turn the counterproductive work behavior is negatively associated with task performance, β

$= -.14$, CI95% (-.27, -.02), $Z = -2.25$, $p < .05$, in the absence of a direct relationship between the Dark Triad and task performance.

Table 6. *Mediation estimates for counterproductive work behaviour in the relationship between Dark Triad and contextual performance*

Effect	Label	Estimate	SE	95% CI		Z	p	% Mediation
				Lower	Upper			
Indirect	$a \times b$	-.02	.01	-.04	-.01	-2.13	.033	75.67
Direct	c	-.01	.02	-.05	.03	-.32	.746	24.33
Total	$c + a \times b$	-.03	.02	-.07	.01	-1.45	.146	100.00

Table 7. *Path analysis for counterproductive work behaviour in the relationship between dark triad and contextual performance*

				95% Confidence Interval						
				Label	Estimate	SE	Lower	Upper	Z	p
DT	→	CWB	a		.17	.03	.11	.22	5.70	< .001
CWB	→	CP	b		-.13	.06	-.24	-.02	-2.30	.021
DT	→	CP	c		-.01	.02	-.05	.03	-.32	.746

DT – Dark triad, CWB – Counterproductive work behaviour, CP – Contextual performance

It is observed that counterproductive work behavior mediates the relationship between Dark Triad and contextual performance, the mediation percentage being 75.67%, and the mediation estimate $\beta = -.02$, CI95% (-.04, -.01), $Z = -2.13$, $p < .05$. The Dark Triad is positively associated with counterproductive work behavior, $\beta = .17$, CI95% (.11, .22), $Z = 5.70$, $p < .01$, and in turn the

counterproductive work behavior is negatively associated with contextual performance, $\beta = -.13$, CI95% (-.24, -.02), $Z = -2.30$, $p < .05$, in the absence of a direct relationship between Dark Triad and contextual performance. Taking into account these results we can say that H2 hypothesis is supported by the analyzed data.

4. DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to capture the relationships that are established between accentuated personality traits and work performance, but also the changes they undergo when considering the effect of counterproductive work behavior.

For the three accentuated personality traits, respectively Machiavellianism, narcissism and psychopathy, the scores were relatively low. This corresponds to the literature, which claims the same thing (Vedel & Thomsen, 2017). These can be related to the above average scores for work performance, demonstrating that individuals tend to

maintain a condescending behavior at work. However, the first proposed hypothesis was not supported by the analyzed data. Despite our expectations, narcissism was positively associated with task performance, and Machiavellianism and psychopathy not having a significant correlation with it. This is in contrast to O'Boyle's (2012) study, which states that traits such as hypecompetitiveness or the need for superiority result in poor performance. However, there are studies that show that narcissism can be a positive predictor of task performance (Guedes, 2017). The hypotheses were

not supported for the relationship between Dark Triad and contextual performance. This has been demonstrated previously in research (O'Boyle et al., 2012). Given the great interest in the Dark Triad, however, it is surprising that there are not many studies attesting to the link between the triad and work performance.

Although the three personality traits share common traits and are often perceived as a singular construct, they have been studied separately in relation to the two constructs, as has been done so far in the literature. Jonason et al. (2012) suggested that a study analyzing all three constructs together would be desirable because it presents the possibility to control for shared variability and thus isolates associations for a single trait.

According to the data analyzed from inferential statistics, the Dark Triad is positively associated with counterproductive work behavior. Therefore, the three constructs, namely Machiavellianism, narcissism and psychopathy are positive predictors for this behavior. This is supported by numerous studies in the literature (Penney et al., 2011; Spector et al., 2006).

The second aim of the study was to establish the mediating role of counterproductive work behavior in the relationship between Dark Triad of personality and work performance.

This was achieved, and the second hypothesis was supported by the correlation created between the dark triad and counterproductive work behavior. There are numerous studies attesting to this relationship, the most relevant being that of O'Boyle (2012).

The descriptive analysis highlighted the fact that the participants obtained the highest score for work performance, in contrast to the counterproductive work behavior, which recorded the lowest scores. This suggests that participants exhibit desirable behavior in the workplace, both in terms of task and contextual performance, completing their tasks effectively and engaging in volunteering for the well-being of the organization, and of colleagues. This is also supported by the study of Spector and Fox (2012), which states that factors that lead to high levels of one of the constructs lead to low levels of the other.

Practical implications

Current research contributes to the support of studies already conducted on the influence of the Dark Triad in the organizational environment. It has already been shown that the dark triad is a positive predictor in relation to counterproductive work behavior. It was also shown that this behavior has a higher correlation with contextual performance than with task performance, this being shown in the present study. In this sense, personal development or

team building sessions for employees can be developed and implemented in order to reduce counterproductive work behaviors. These, whether or not they are based on negative personality traits, will often lead to a decrease in job performance and a worsening of the organizational climate. By reducing or limiting these behaviors, employees will have a higher well-being and will perform better.

Limitations and future directions

One of the major limitations of this study is the number of studies within the three concepts studied. There are not enough research to study the relationship between the Dark Triad and work performance in relation to counterproductive work behavior. Another limitation of this study refers to the variability and veracity of the data, as there is a possibility that they may be endangered by the way the instruments were distributed (via an online form sent on the social networking platform Facebook). Due to the fact that the persons did not reveal their identity, it was not possible to avoid repeated completion by the same person, limiting quite a lot the applicability of the study. Another possible limitation is related to the relatively small number of long-term employees. Some participants may have been employed for too short a time to be able to provide relevant answers.

However, starting from the results obtained in this research, it would also be interesting and useful to study the link between stress, job satisfaction, perceptions of organizational justice and work performance in relation to counterproductive work behavior, as all these are predictors of work performance. Thus, strategies can be developed to combat counterproductive work behavior in the organizational environment.

Personal contribution

One of the most important personal contributions is the effort to compose the research group. A sustained effort was required to apply the questionnaire to over 100 respondents as the sample consisted of people of different ages and different organizational backgrounds.

Another personal contribution is related to the presentation in a more realistic way of the overall image, of concepts such as counterproductive work behavior or contextual performance, for which there are no recent studies in the Romanian literature.

Although more research has been conducted on this topic, the current study comes with a note of novelty, as it also analyzes the relationship between the Dark Triad and task performance, previous studies generally focusing on the relationship with contextual performance.

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