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“The Darkest of all” The relationship between the Dark Triad traits and organizational citizenship behavior

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ABSTRACT

The present study examined dark triad personality traits as predictors of in-role and extra-role work-related behaviors above and beyond the effects of relevant dispositional and situational variables. 256 Hungarian working adults ($M_{\text{age}} = 37.121$ years, $SD_{\text{age}} = 11.99$ years) took part in the present study. The results showed that only subclinical psychopathy was a consistent negative predictor of in-role and extra-role behaviors. When psychopathy was controlled for, Machiavellianism was positively related to organizational citizenship behaviors beneficial to the organization and to the performance of in-role behaviors, but was unrelated to citizenship behaviors beneficial to individuals. Subclinical narcissism was unrelated to the outcome variables. Together, these results can contribute to the understanding of the role of dark triad personality traits in the prediction of in-role and extra-role behaviors. The study's implication for theory and research were discussed, its limitations were identified, and directions for future research were suggested.

1. Introduction

Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) is defined as “individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization” (Organ, 1988, p. 4). The importance of OCBs has long been recognized: OCBs can function as a lubricant to the social machinery of the organization (Smith, Organ, & Near, 1983). There are both dispositional and situational antecedents of the tendency to engage in citizenship behaviors. The majority of the dispositional studies have focused on the Five-Factor Model of personality traits, and examined the association between broad personality traits and citizenship behavior (for a recent review see, Chiaburu, Oh, Berry, Li, & Gardner, 2011). Less is known, however, about the effect of the dark personality traits on the tendency to engage (or not engage) in OCBs. The present study aims to investigate the relationship between the dark triad traits of personality and OCB after controlling for relevant dispositional, situational, and demographic factors. Because of the OCBs contributions to the effective functioning of organizations, it is important to identify the personality antecedents of OCBs.

1.1. OCB and in-role behavior (IRB)

OCBs are actions that are beyond explicit role requirements, but

essential for organizational effectiveness. Typical examples of OCBs are helping colleagues, attending non-required work meetings, and volunteering for extra job activities. Williams and Anderson (1991) suggest that OCBs can be defined by its target. Citizenship behaviors aimed at individuals /colleagues (OCB-I) are different from citizenship behaviors directed towards the organization (OCB-O). Citizenship behaviors can also be differentiated from in-role behaviors (IRB). IRBs are the necessary behaviors for task completion (Williams & Anderson, 1991). According to Podsakoff, Whiting, Podsakoff, and Blume's (2009) meta-analysis, there are a number of meaningful associations between OCBs and a variety of important organizational-level outcomes, including organizational productivity, and efficiency. There has been a plethora of studies on the positive effects of OCBs (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993; Podsakoff & MacKenzie, 1997, but see Begeron, 2007; Nielsen, Bachrach, Sundstrom, & Halfhill, 2012 for a counterargument). Not surprisingly, a considerable amount of research has been devoted to identifying the antecedents of helping behavior in the workplace (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). However, the antecedents of OCBs are far from being fully understood (Chiaburu et al., 2011). The focus of the present research is the importance of the dark triad personality traits on predicting citizenship behaviors.

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1.2. Dark triad

The main purpose of our study was to show that dark personality traits, especially subclinical psychopathy, have a distinct contribution to the prediction of organizational citizenship behaviors above and beyond the effect of broad personality traits, demographic and situational variables.

The Dark Triad is a term used to describe a constellation of three empirically related yet theoretically distinct dimensions of exploitative personality: subclinical narcissism, subclinical psychopathy, and Machiavellianism (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). These personality constructs have a common theme of certain disregard towards the well-being of others, high level of disagreeableness, and callousness (Jakobwitz & Egan, 2006; Jones & Figueredo, 2013; Paulhus & Williams, 2002). Note, however, that dark triad traits can still be considered as unique constructs (Jonason & Webster, 2010; Jones & Paulhus, 2010, 2011, 2014).

Machiavellianism is “a strategy of social conduct that involves manipulating others for personal gain, often against the other’s self-interest” (Wilson, Near, & Miller, 1996, p. 285). Individuals high in Machiavellianism are characterized by lack of empathy for others (Paal & Bereczkei, 2007), selfishness, the willingness to manipulate people to their own advantage, lie to, and exploit others (Christie & Geis, 1970; Jones & Paulhus, 2009). They tend to ignore the positive reciprocity norm (Gunthorsdottir, McCabe, & Smith, 2002). It can be argued that individuals high in Machiavellianism are less apt to engage in OCBs. However, there are also reasons to believe that Machiavellianism is positively associated with extra-role behaviors. Jonason, Slomski, and Partyka (2012) demonstrated that the use of soft tactics, including OCB-like behaviors such as being a team player and exchange of favor, was associated with high scores on Machiavellianism. Individuals high in Machiavellianism may engage in public displays of citizenship behaviors to create positive impressions (Bereczkei, Birkas, & Kerekes, 2010, Kessler et al., 2010,.) and they can be also described by long-term time orientation (Jones & Paulhus, 2010).

Psychopathy is “a personality trait involving an arrogant and deceitful interpersonal style, a deficient affective experience and an impulsive and irresponsible behavioral style” (Boey & Vantilborgh, 2015, p. 48). Subclinical psychopathy is correlated with the insensitivity to others (LeBreton, Binning, & Adorno, 2006; O’Boyle, Forsyth, Banks, & McDaniels, 2012), emotional callousness, impulsivity, and lack of empathy (O’Boyle, Forsyth, Banks, Story, & White, 2014). They can be described by short-term time orientation and low identity needs (Jones & Paulhus, 2010). Not surprisingly, people high in psychopathy are not particularly good candidates for performing citizenship behaviors.

Subclinical narcissism is a subclinical version of narcissistic personality disorder (Raskin & Hall, 1979). People high in narcissism can be characterized by grandiosity, entitlement, dominance, and superiority. They have a very high opinion of self-worth, and believe that they are superior to others (Paunonen, Lönnqvist, Verkasalo, Leikas, & Nissinen, 2006). The “negative characteristics (of narcissism) principally have to do with the tendency to exploit others for personal gain. This disposition is a consequence of the narcissist’s sense of entitlement.” (Paunonen et al., 2006, p. 476) They also believe that reciprocity and obligation rules do not apply to them (Campbell, Reeder, Sedikides, & Elliott, 2000). It can be expected that narcissism is negatively related to citizenship behaviors. What makes this relationship more complicated, however, is the positive side of subclinical narcissism. Narcissists are motivated to engage in impression management (Bourdage, Lee, Lee, & Shin, 2012), they use soft tactics (Jonason et al., 2012), and they have high identity needs (Jones & Paulhus, 2010).

1.3. Dark triad traits and citizenship behavior

Considering the increased attention in the dark triad of personality, it is surprising that only a few empirical studies linking dark triad

personality and positive discretionary behaviors in the workplace have been conducted (Spain, Harms, & LeBreton, 2013). Unfortunately, most of these studies have examined the three traits separately despite their shared variance (Jonason et al., 2012).

Becker and O’Hair (2007) found a negative association between Machiavellianism and citizenship behavior. Similarly, Zagenczyk, Restubog, Kiewitz, Kiazad, and Tang (2014) observed a negative relationship between Machiavellianism and citizenship behavior in four different samples. These results are supported by some indirect evidence. In their study, Van Dyne, Graham, and Dienesch (1994) found that cynicism, a trait related to Machiavellianism, was a negative predictor of covenantal relationship. This, in turn led to less willingness to engage in citizenship behaviors. Contrary to these findings, Dahling, Whitaker, and Levy (2009) found no relationship between Machiavellianism and citizenship behavior in a sample of employed students. To our knowledge, only one study has investigated the hypothesis that subclinical psychopathy would reduce the willingness to engage in citizenship behaviors. Schütte, Blicke and their colleagues (2018) found negative relationship between self-centered impulsivity (one facet of psychopathy) and contextual performance. Judge, LePine, and Rich (2006) found that narcissism was significantly and negatively related to supervisor ratings of organizational citizenship behaviors and positively related to self-ratings of organizational citizenship behaviors. Additionally, there is a negative relationship between narcissism and relationship-oriented behavior (Blair, Hoffman, & Helland, 2008), which is an indirect evidence of the suggested negative association between narcissism and extra-role behaviors. In contrast to these findings, Bourdage et al. (2012) found that low humility, a broad personality trait closely related to narcissism, is a positive predictor of citizenship behavior. The authors argued that citizenship behaviors performed by narcissistic individuals serve impression management purposes.

Based on the above, it can be hypothesized that there is a negative relationship between subclinical psychopathy and OCB. However, the relationship between the other two dark personality traits and citizenship behavior may not be as straightforward: there are certain factors, particularly impression management, long-term orientation, and the use of soft tactics, which may prompt people high in Machiavellianism and narcissism to display certain kind of citizenship behaviors in certain kind of situations. Since, several variables, such as job satisfaction, age and gender have been suggested as affecting organizational citizenship behaviors (Ng, Lam, & Feldman, 2016; Organ & Lingl, 1995; Smith et al., 1983), these variables were controlled for in our analyses. In our study, we only have one clear hypothesis about the relationship between dark personality traits and OCBs: extra-role organizational behaviors will be negatively related to subclinical psychopathy.

Since, several situational (e.g., job satisfaction, organizational identification, organizational justice, organizational trust, perceived organizational support etc.) and demographic variables (e.g. age, gender) have been suggested as affecting organizational citizenship behaviors (Ng et al., 2016; Organ & Lingl, 1995; Smith et al., 1983; Viswesvaran & Ones, 2000), these variables were controlled for in our analyses. Because of the strong associations between Honesty-Humility and the dark triad traits (Hodson et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2013), we also controlled for HEXACO personality in our analyses.

2. Method

2.1. Participants and procedure

A total of 256 Hungarian adults who work full time were recruited in the present study (148 females), aged between 20 and 65 ($M_{\text{age}} = 37.121$ years, $SD_{\text{age}} = 11.99$ years). Our study was conducted with a relatively homogeneous sample in terms of level of education (62.5% had university degree, and another 34.4% choose the “finished high school or ongoing university education” option) and place of residence (nearly 10% lived in the capital, and another 77.4% lived in

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