The dark side of personality predicts positive and negative work attitudes

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A B S T R A C T

This exploratory study examined the relationship between positive and negative organisational attitudes and the dark side of personality. In all, 451 employees working in the medical sector completed a number of questionnaires including the Hogan Development Survey and well-established organisational measures. We found that Excitable, Sceptical and Bold dark-side traits were predictors for both positive and negative organisational attitudes, whereas Leisurely was a predictor for positive organisational attitudes and Cautious for negative. We also found that the higher order factor Moving Away from Others was the strongest predictor for both types of work attitudes whereas Moving Against and Moving Towards Others were positive predictors for positive organisational attitudes. Implications and limitations are considered.

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1. Introduction

This study looks at dark-side personality correlates of job attitudes. Job attitudes have an effect on everyone in an organisation, from the employees to the owner. Consequently, it is essential to understand how positive and negative attitudes affect the working environment. In the last fifteen years, there has been an increased interest by I/O researchers in the "dark side" of work experience (Ghaemi, 2011; Spain, Harms, & Lebreton, 2013). There are many studies that have associated certain dark-side traits with work success and failure (Board & Fritzon, 2005; Furnham, Crump, & Ritchie, 2013; Furnham, Trickey, & Hyde, 2012; Palaiou & Furnham, 2014). The dark-side traits are often seen to moderate the relationship between leader emergence and leadership effectiveness (Judge, Piccolo, & Kosalka, 2009; Khoo & Burch, 2008).

In this study, we use the Hogan Development Survey (HDS) in order to assess the role of the dark side of personality in job attitudes. The HDS is based on APA 4th edition of Axis II and focuses on maladaptive personalities occupying the psychological space halfway between psychopathology and normal personality, which means that it allows for a dimensional approach to the research. It has three higher order factors (Moving Away, Moving Against, Moving Towards) that are based on Horney's taxonomy (Horney, 1950) (see Table 1).

Researchers have noted the potential but paradoxical benefits of high scores on dark-side traits. Judge et al. (2009) noted that socially undesirable traits can in some (work) situations have positive implications. Harms, Spain, and Hannah (2011) indeed demonstrated this in a

longitudinal study of dark-side traits in military cadets over a three year period. Also Zibarras, Port, and Woods (2008) found innovative characteristics in managers related to 'Moving Against People' traits like narcissism and anti-social behaviour.

2. Organisational attitudes

The most prominent theoretical model of attitudes is the ABC model. A stands for affective component that is related to feelings of an attitude, B stands for behaviour component that is related to the tendencies to act upon an attitude and C stands for cognitive component that is related to thoughts towards an attitude (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). The current study looks at composite positive and negative organisational attitudes (POAs and NOAs). In order to get a more robust and reliable measure of positive and negative attitudes towards work and one's organisation we combined various related measures that are associated with either affective, or behavioural or cognitive component.

2.1. Positive organisational attitudes

There are many concepts that are closely linked and positively inter-correlated: job commitment, engagement, involvement and satisfaction. *Job satisfaction* can be seen as the extent to where job is a source of fulfilment and contentment or a means to an end (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). It refers to an employee's affective reaction to his/her job regarding how much it satisfies his/her wanted outcome (Jorfi & Jorfi, 2011). *Organisational commitment* refers to an employee's affective reaction to the characteristics of his/hers employing company (Buchanan, 1974). *Work engagement* is considered the opposite of burn-out (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003). Employees with high scores in work engagement are positive, fulfilling, energetic and effective in their duties.

Table 1
Description of HDS and its association with DSM-IV.

DSM-IV	Definition	Higher order factors of HDS	HDS scales	Definition
Borderline	Inappropriate anger; unstable and intense relationships	Moving Away	Excitable	Moody and inconsistent concerns being enthusiastic about persons ideas, and projects and then becoming disappointed in them
Paranoid	Distrustful and suspicious of others; motives of others are interpreted negatively		Sceptical	Cynical, distrustful, overly sensitive to criticism, and Sceptical of others' true intensions
Avoidant	Social inhibition; feelings of inadequacy and hypersensitivity to criticism or rejection		Cautious	Reluctant to take risks for fear of being rejected or negatively evaluated
Schizoid	Emotional coldness and detachment from social relationships; indifferent to praise and criticism		Reserved	Aloof, detached and uncommunicative; lacking interest in or awareness of the feelings of others
Passive–aggressive	Passive resistance to adequate social and occupational performance; irritated when asked to do something he/she does not want to		Leisurely	Independent; ignoring people's requests and becoming irritated or argumentative if they persist
Narcissistic	Arrogant and haughty behaviours or attitudes, grandiose sense of self-importance and entitlement	Moving Against	Bold	Unusually self-confident; feelings of grandiosity and entitlement; over valuation of one's capabilities
Antisocial	Disregard for the truth; impulsivity and failure to plan ahead; failure to conform		Mischievous	Enjoying risk taking and testing the limits; needing excitement; manipulative, deceitful, cunning and exploitative
Histrionic	Excessive emotionality and attention seeking; self dramatising, theatrical and exaggerated emotional expression		Colourful	Expressive, animated and dramatic; wanting to be noticed and needing to be the centre of attention
Schizotypal	Odd beliefs or magical thinking; behaviour or speech that is odd, eccentric or peculiar		Imaginative	Acting and thinking in creative and sometimes odd or unusual ways
Obsessive–compulsive	Preoccupations with orderliness; rules, perfectionism and control; over conscientiousness and inflexible	Moving Towards	Diligent	Meticulous, precise and perfectionistic, inflexible about rules and procedures; critical of others
Dependent	Difficulty making everyday decisions without excessive advice and reassurance; difficulty expressing disagreement out of fear of loss of support or approval		Dutiful	Eager to please and reliant on others for support and guidance; reluctant to take independent action or to go against popular opinion

Definition is based on Hogan and Hogan (1997).

Perceived organisational support refers to employee's point of view on how the organisation that (s)he is working for is perceiving him/her. In other words, the extent to which the employee feels valued and supported by the organisation that (s)he is working for. Employees are often concerned with the company's commitment to them (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

2.2. Negative organisational attitudes

There are also a number of tests and concepts that measure negative organisational attitudes (NOAs). *Burnout* is the opposite of work engagement. It has three main dimensions; exhaustion (i.e. reflects on employee's feelings being overextended and depleted), cynicism or depersonalisation (i.e. refers to negative and callous reactions to different aspects of the job) and detachment (i.e. refers to the reduction of efficacy, productivity and lack of achievement at work) (Maslach et al., 2001). *Perceived stress* refers to the level to which situation in one's life is evaluated as stressful (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983). It attempts to investigate the degree to which someone feels that his/her life is uncontrollable, unpredictable and overloaded. Employees that score high in perceived stress tend not only to be physically weaker than others but also to be less satisfied and perform less well (Cohen & Williamson, 1988). *Physical health* refers to the somatic symptoms of an individual caused by his/her negative feelings (e.g. stress and exhaustion) in the working environment (Schat, Kelloway, & Desmarais, 2005). The perception of stress has the potential to influence the physical state of an individual by causing negative affective states that may even lead to behavioural patterns that can increase the risk of a disease (Cohen, Janicki-Deverts, & Miller, 2007). Physical health has a negative relationship with absenteeism and low performance (Merrill et al., 2013).

3. Current study

The aim of this study is to investigate which dark-side personality traits predict job attitudes. As, we have established earlier, job attitudes and personality traits play a vital role not only in the organisation's

growth and development but also to the employee's behaviour and perception of work. There are not any direct hypotheses because this is an exploratory study for two main reasons. The first reason is that to the best of our knowledge, there is no literature on predicting job attitudes using HDS. The second reason is that the literature is unclear regarding the exact components that correspond to positive and negative job attitudes. Thus, for the purpose of this exploratory study, we suggest a series of affective, behavioural and cognitive components to compose what we called positive and negative organisational attitudes. In order to create POAs we combined job satisfaction, organisational commitment, perceived organisational support and work engagement. In order to create NOAs, we combined burnout, perceived stress and physical health.

4. Method

4.1. Participants

In all 451 employees (51 females — 11.3%) of a United Kingdom medical oriented public sector participated in this study. The age range was between 21 and 64 years ($M = 39.98$, $SD = 8.3$). The sample consisted of British (69.8%), mixed (0.2%), European (1.1%), Asian (0.6%) and unknown origin due to missing data (28.2%).

4.2. Measures

1. *The Hogan Development Survey* (Hogan & Hogan, 1997) contains 168 true/false items that assess dysfunctional interpersonal theme which reflect one's distorted beliefs about others that emerge when people encounter stress or stop considering how their actions affect others.
2. *Physical Health Questionnaire* (*PHQ*): The Physical Health Questionnaire (Schat et al., 2005) is a self-administered health questionnaire that measures four aspects of somatic symptoms. These symptoms are sleep disturbance, headaches, gastro-intestinal problems and respiratory infections. It includes 14 items.
3. *Work Burnout* (*WB*): The Work Burnout questionnaire is a self-administered questionnaire that was taken from the Copenhagen