

# The buffering effect of micro-daily events on the relationship between the dark triad traits and counterproductive work behavior

Buffering  
effect of micro-  
daily events

667

Ana Junça-Silva

*Instituto Universitário de Lisboa (ISCTE-IUL), Business Research Unit – BRU (UNIDE-IUL), Lisbon, Portugal and Instituto Politécnico de Tomar, Tomar, Portugal, and*

Daniel Silva

*Instituto Politécnico de Tomar, Tomar, Portugal and Department of Management and Economics and NECE Research Unit in Business Sciences, University of Beira Interior, Covilhã, Portugal*

Received 7 December 2021  
Revised 8 March 2022  
11 May 2022  
Accepted 25 June 2022

## Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this study was to analyze the moderating role of micro-events on the relationship between the three Dark Triad dimensions and counterproductive work-behaviors. The social exchange theory and the person–situation interactionist model supported this study’s model that analyzed whether micro-events at work would moderate the relationship between the three dimensions of the dark triad personality (Machiavellianism, psychopathy and narcissism) and specific types of counterproductive work behaviors (CWB; toward the organization, and the individual).

**Design/methodology/approach** – To achieve this goal, this study used a sample of 241 currently employed participants.

**Findings** – The results showed that individuals who scored higher on their dark triad traits engaged more frequently in CWB; however, when they experienced more daily uplifts than daily hassles, their CWBs significantly decreased.

**Research limitations/implications** – The cross-sectional design should be regarded as a limitation, and the authors assessed all the variables through self-reported measures.

**Originality/value** – Such results proved to be fundamental for a better understanding of employees’ behavior, as well as the impact of micro-events in the organizational settings.

**Keywords** Micro-daily events, Dark triad, Counterproductive work behavior, Personality, Organizational behavior, Individual differences

**Paper type** Research paper

© Ana Junça-Silva and Daniel Silva. Published by Emerald Publishing Limited. This article is published under the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) licence. Anyone may reproduce, distribute, translate and create derivative works of this article (for both commercial and non-commercial purposes), subject to full attribution to the original publication and authors. The full terms of this licence may be seen at <http://creativecommons.org/licences/by/4.0/legalcode>

**Conflict of interest statement:** The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

**Compliance of ethical standard statement:** All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

**Informed consent:** Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants involved in the study.

**Data availability:** The data of the study will be available upon reasonable request.



## 1. Introduction

Personality is a significant predictor of diverse work-related behaviors, such as manipulation or theft (Jonason *et al.*, 2012). The dark triad (DT) personality, a set of three intercorrelated yet conceptually separate personality constructs (Machiavellianism, narcissism and psychopathy) has received attention from scholars, as it is hard to find organizations that do not have workers with dark traits (Lučić, 2013). Paulhus and Williams (2002) considered these traits as socially aversive and that “individuals with these traits share a tendency to be callous, selfish, and malevolent in their interpersonal dealings” (p. 100). Narcissism is related to entitlement and perceived superiority (Paulhus and Williams, 2002), psychopathy refers to the lack of empathy and impulsivity (Jones and Paulhus, 2014), and Machiavellianism is related to the use of manipulative and deceitful behaviors intended to undermine others (Jonason *et al.*, 2012).

The DT traits have consistently been associated with counterproductive work behaviors (CWB) (O’Boyle *et al.*, 2012). These are deliberate actions that harm the organization (e.g. robberies) or its members (e.g. manipulation; O’Boyle *et al.*, 2011).

Building upon a social exchange perspective and in the person-situation interactionist model, we expect that the DT traits are positively related to two forms of CWB (toward the organization and the individual), but that this relationship would be moderated by micro-events.

## 2. Theoretical framework

### 2.1 Relationship between the dark triads traits and counterproductive work behaviors

Paulhus and Williams (2002) identified three traits – narcissism, psychopathy and Machiavellianism – that share a common characteristic, social aversiveness and include a degree of malevolence that influence behavior.

Individuals high in Machiavellianism are characterized by their antipathy, low levels of affectivity, by their own and distorted view of morality, that comes from their desire to manipulate, lie and exploit others, with an excessive focus on their goals (Wu and LeBreton, 2011). This trait is defined by three sets of interrelated values: a belief based on manipulative tactics in dealing with others; a cynical view of human nature and an amoral perspective that overrates convenience, over the principle (O’Boyle *et al.*, 2012). Machiavellians are prone to take revenge on others (Nathanson, 2008) and to lie, more regularly, to people in their inner circle (friends, family, etc.) (Kashy and DePaulo, 1996). Diverse studies have shown the negative consequences of Machiavellianism in the work context, for example, unethical behaviors (Moore *et al.*, 2012), manipulative leaders, decreased performance and antisocial behavior (Molm, 2010). Because of the absence of emotional involvement in interpersonal relationships, communication tends to be less controlled, and as such, they tend to engage in communicative CWB’s (e.g. verbal aggression or rumours) (Wu and Lebreton, 2011).

Psychopathy is characterized by impulsivity, together with an immediate suppression of personal needs (Hare, 1999), a constant look for experiencing emotions, combined with low levels of empathy and anxiety (Spain *et al.*, 2014) and a belief in their superiority and self-promotion trends (Lynam and Widiger, 2007). Jones and Paulhus (2014) referred that psychopathy is based on two key elements: the lack of affection (insensitivity and lack of empathy) and an absence of self-control (impulsivity) (O’Boyle *et al.*, 2012). As a result, psychopaths are immune to anxiety and fear, to a certain extent, becoming less vulnerable to embarrassment (Hare, 1999). Psychopathy is the most malevolent trait of the DT. There is evidence that psychopaths tend to engage in interpersonal conflicts (Boddy, 2014), bullying (Van Geel *et al.*, 2017) and abusive supervision (Boddy, 2010). They also tend to engage in

risky and compulsive acts, such as unsafe behaviors, which can, lead to the destruction of organizational property, inappropriate physical and verbal behaviors or others that arise as an immediate response to negative events (Wu and Lebreton, 2011).

Narcissism is marked by a sense of grandiosity, lack of empathy (Smith, and Lilienfeld, 2013), exaggeration about achievements, rejection of criticism, difficulty to be committed and a continuous search for relationships with individuals who admire them (Resick *et al.*, 2009). It also includes self-admiration and self-love and the need that this self-love to be reinforced by third parties (O'Boyle *et al.*, 2012). At work, narcissism leads to poor performances (Judge *et al.*, 2006), dissatisfaction and toxic leaders (Schmidt, 2008). They tend to interpret criticism as threats, triggering anger that leads to CWB's (Spector, 2011). Wu and Lebreton (2011) also argued that they tend to see themselves as victims, which increases their vulnerability to engage in negative interactions. This negativism and sense of unfairness increase the likelihood of engaging in CWB's. When narcissistic interpret interactions as transgressions, it may lead them to absenteeism, retaliatory or fraudulent behavior (Perri, 2011). Their sense of superiority leads them to disregard others and to dominate them (Wu and Lebreton, 2011). Because narcissists have a special view of themselves, they do not believe that their behavior is negative, which increases the likelihood of performing CWBs.

CWBs are deliberate actions aimed to damage employees and/or the organization (O'Boyle *et al.*, 2014). CWBs may be toward the organization (CWB-O) (e.g. excessive pauses, misuse of organizational property, theft, purposeful error; Spector *et al.*, 2006) and the individual [CWB-I; e.g. physical and verbal aggression, abuse of information (personal or organizational toward third parties) and antipathy].

There is plenty of evidence of the relationship between the DT traits and CWB (Spector *et al.*, 2006). However, even though this established link, there has been a call for exploring the role of situational factors in strengthening or weakening this relationship (O'Boyle *et al.*, 2012).

### *2.2 Moderating role of micro-events as a moderator*

Micro-events include daily hassles or daily uplifts. Daily hassles are the tiny things that somehow irritate or distress individuals (e.g. receiving feedback that is perceived as unfair or inadequate, gossip; Junça-Silva *et al.*, 2020). Daily uplifts are the positive daily experiences that enhance well-being (Cropanzano and Dasborough, 2015; e.g. receiving a compliment from someone at work, to make deliberate breaks at work).

The relevance of micro-events for work-behaviors has been acknowledge. For instance, Junça-silva *et al.* (2020) demonstrated that micro-daily events predicted job performance, at both between and within levels. Daily events were also found to be predictors of creativity (Amabile *et al.*, 2005) and organizational citizenship behaviors (Spence *et al.*, 2011).

We built our hypothesis based on the social exchange theory and person-situation interactionism (Mischel and Shoda, 1995). First, the social exchange theory proposes that individuals behave by weighing the costs and benefits that they expect to receive, either through concrete rewards (pay, goods) or socioemotional ones (status and admiration; Blau, 1964). These benefits improve the quality of the interactions between employees and employers and are strengthened when the costs are fewer than the valued rewards; there is trust between each part regarding their obligations over time; the exchange is perceived to be fair (which implies mutual adherence to the norm of reciprocity); and there is a psychological commitment between each part (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005).

It is likely that individuals with high levels of dark traits engage more frequently in CWBs, because of their inherent "core of darkness," such as callous affect and manipulation (Jones and Figueredo, 2013). Moreover, dark individuals tend to interpret in a more negative

way what organization and its members do and practice; they also tend to experience more negative emotions at work (Lata and Chaudhary, 2021).

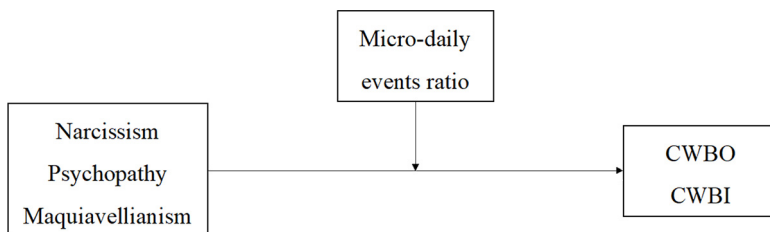
For instance, some studies have shown that narcissists respond more aggressively to ego-threat, whereas psychopaths respond more aggressively when feel provoked or unprovoked (Jones and Paulhus, 2010). However, based on the social exchange theory, we expect that a positive day, with more daily uplifts (than daily hassles), will attenuate the aggressive responses of narcissists, psychopaths and Machiavellians. Accordingly, by appraising their day as positive, employees – even with high levels of DT – may perceive their exchanges with the organization and its members as positive, improving their gratefulness to them, decreasing the CWB behavioral patterns. Thus, we expect that a set of positive situations may stimulate the narcissist’s sense of self-importance and reduce ego-threat. Plus, we propose that a positive ratio of micro-events (more daily uplifts, than daily hassles) will minimize the perception of being provoked, the trigger of aggressive responses from psychopaths and thus reduce CWBs. Similarly, we believe that Machiavellians, when experiencing more daily uplifts, will perceive their day as more positive, decreasing their use of risky overt tactics (i.e. CWB). Thus, experiencing more positive situations, such as daily uplifts, may inhibit the natural tendencies of an employee with high levels of DT traits, resulting in reduced CWB. Moreover, these individuals may perceive a strategic advantage in maintaining good standing by engaging in fewer CWBs, thereby allowing them to strengthen their vantage point and consolidate future opportunities to exploit the organization (Palmer *et al.*, 2017).

Another supportive perspective is the person-situation interactionist model (Mischel and Shoda, 1995). Accordingly, the conditions within which behavior will be buffered or intensified and the strength of such situational factors, can influence the likelihood for trait expression. Hence, situational influences, such as micro-events, may act as a boundary condition that influences the frequency with which employees high in narcissism, Machiavellianism and psychopathy may engage in CWB. Recently, Wilhau (2021) demonstrated that the three dark traits predicted social loafing, and that these relations were moderated by a social contextual factor – the team member exchange. Similarly, ul Shuja *et al.* (2021) showed that the dark traits were related to the time banditry behavior and that the work ethical context moderated such relations.

Based on these perspectives and empirical studies, we expect that micro-events would moderate the relationship between the DT traits and CWB, in such a way that the normal tendency for narcissistic, Machiavellians and psychopaths perform CWBs would decrease when they experience a positive ratio of micro-events (more daily uplifts, than hassles: Figure 1). Thus, we propose the following hypotheses:

- H1. Micro-events will moderate the relationship between narcissism and CWB, such that the relationship will be stronger when the ratio of micro-events is negative and weaker when the ratio of micro-daily events is positive.

**Figure 1.**  
Conceptual model: the moderating role of micro-events on the relationship between the DT traits and CWBs



- H2. Micro-events will moderate the relationship between Machiavellianism and CWB, such that the relationship will be stronger when the ratio of micro-events is negative and weaker when the ratio of micro-daily events is positive.
- H3. Micro-events will moderate the relationship between psychopathy and CWB, such that the relationship will be stronger when the ratio of micro-events is negative and weaker when the ratio of micro-events is positive.

### 3. Method

#### 3.1 Participants and procedure

In this study, participated 241 Portuguese working adults from different working sectors, including health (34%), services (32%), education (25%) and finance (9%). Of the overall sample, 74% were women. The mean age was 39.36 years old (SD = 9.55), and the mean organizational tenure was 10.65 years (SD = 9.66). The majority were graduated (63.1%), and the mean of children was 1 (SD = 0.89).

We adopted a snowball sampling method to recruit participants; first, we contacted 20 participants from our professional networks and asked them to participate in the study and to indicate contacts from individuals who might be interested in participating. Then, we emailed those contacts with a formal invitation asking them to participate in a “study about daily events at work.” In that email, we also assured the confidentiality and anonymity of the data and asked them to reply to that email, if they agreed to participate. Those who accepted to participate received another email with the survey link. From the 300 emails sent, there were 241 valid responses (response rate: 80%).

#### 3.2 Measures

To measure micro-events, we used the scale for daily hassles and uplifts at work (Junça-Silva *et al.*, 2020). It measures the frequency of daily hassles (ten items,  $\alpha = 0.86$ , e.g. “Someone was rude to me at work”) and uplifts (eight items,  $\alpha = 0.88$ , e.g. “I received positive feedback on my performance”). Participants answered on a five-point Likert scale (1-never occurred; 5-occurred more than four times). To test our hypotheses, we created a ratio between daily uplifts and hassles. This ratio allows the identification of the daily uplifts’ proportionality regarding daily hassles. That is, when the ratio is higher than one, it means that daily uplifts occurred more frequently than daily hassles did.

To measure the *DT*, we used the dirty dozen (Jonason and Webster, 2010), which includes 12 items to measure narcissism (e.g. “I tend to manipulate others to get what I want”), psychopathy (e.g. “Usually, I don’t feel remorse”) and Machiavellianism (e.g. “I tend to look for status or prestige”). Participants answered on a five-point Likert scale (1 – not at all; 5 – very much). Cronbach’  $\alpha$  ranged between 0.89 and 0.92 for the subscales.

To measure CWBs, we used the CWB workplace deviance scale (Bennett, and Robinson, 2000). It includes 19 items that evaluated CWB-I ( $\alpha = 0.91$ , “I joked with someone at work”) and CWB-O ( $\alpha = 0.94$ , “I took something from work without permission”). Answers were given on a five-point Likert scale (1 – never; 5 – always).

#### 3.3 Data analyses

To test the moderation hypotheses, we used model 1 from the macro-PROCESS on SPSS (Hayes, 2018). This macro is useful, as it previously centers the variables around their mean and allows for obtaining confidence intervals to calculate the simple slopes (Dawson, 2014; Hayes, 2018).

To test for common method bias, we performed confirmatory factor analyses. The results showed that the seven-factor model (Machiavellianism, psychopathy, narcissism, daily hassles and uplifts, CWB-I and CWB-O) fitted the data well (root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.05, comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.94 Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) = 0.93, Standardized root mean square residuals (SRMR) = 0.04). The single-factor model evidenced an unacceptable fit (RMSEA = 0.15, CFI = 0.62 TLI = 0.59, SRMR = 0.14).

**4. Results**

*4.1 Preliminary analyses*

Means, standard deviations and correlations between the variables are shown in [Table 1](#).

*4.2 Hypotheses testing*

*H1* expected that micro-events would moderate the relationship between narcissism and CWBs, such that the relationship would be stronger when the ratio of micro-events would be negative. The results showed a significant interaction effect of narcissism with micro-events in predicting CWBI ( $B = -0.58, \beta = -0.08, \Delta R^2 = 0.14, p < 0.001$ ) and CWBO ( $B = -0.62, \beta = -0.08, \Delta R^2 = 0.13, p < 0.001$ ) ([Table 2](#)). We plotted the moderating effect of micro-events on CWBI and CWBO across high (+1SD), mean (M) and low levels (-1SD) of narcissism (Dearing, and Hamilton, 2006). Regarding CWBI, [Figure 2](#) shows that the positive relation between narcissism and CWBI was stronger when the ratio of micro-events was negative (simple slope = 0.58,  $\beta = 0.05, p < 0.001, CI_{95\%} [0.49, 0.67]$ ). [Figure 3](#) shows the same pattern for CWBO and supports that the positive association between narcissism and CWBO was intensified when the ratio of micro-events was negative (simple slope = 0.66,  $\beta = 0.05, p < 0.001, CI_{95\%} [0.57, 0.76]$ ). Moreover, narcissism evidenced a positive relation to CWBI and CWBO, while micro-events showed a negative association with both CWBs. Thus, *H1* was supported.

*H2* expected that micro-events would moderate the relationship between Machiavellianism and CWBs, such that the relationship would be stronger when the ratio of micro-events was negative. The results showed a significant interaction effect of Machiavellianism with micro-events in predicting CWBI ( $B = -0.55, \beta = -0.07, \Delta R^2 = 0.11, p < 0.001$ ) and CWBO ( $B = -0.58, \beta = -0.07, \Delta R^2 = 0.10, p < 0.001$ ) ([Table 3](#)). We plotted the interaction effect of micro-events on CWBI and CWBO across high (+1SD), mean (M) and low levels (-1SD) of Machiavellianism. Regarding CWBI, [Figure 4](#) shows that the positive association between Machiavellianism and CWBI was stronger when the ratio of micro-events was negative (simple slope = 0.60,  $\beta = 0.03, p < 0.001, CI_{95\%} [0.54, 0.67]$ ) and [Figure 5](#) shows the same pattern for CWBO supporting that the link between Machiavellianism and CWBO was intensified when the ratio of micro-events was negative (simple slope = 0.69,  $\beta = 0.04, p < 0.001, CI_{95\%} [0.62, 0.75]$ ). Machiavellianism also

**Table 1.**  
Means, standard deviations and correlations between the variables

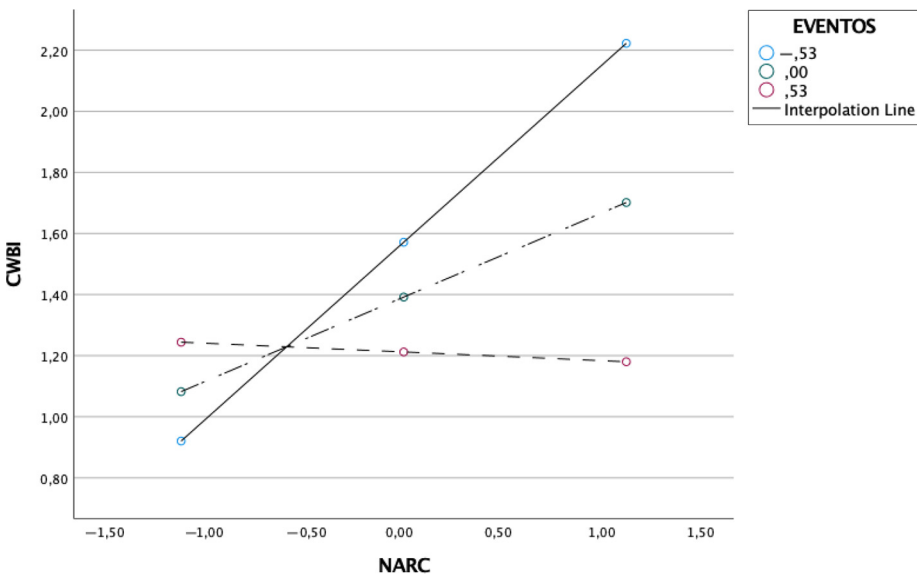
Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Micro-daily events	1.24	0.52	(0.88)					
2. CWB-O	1.68	0.84	-0.35**	(0.94)				
3. CWB-I	1.49	0.75	-0.29**	0.85**	(0.91)			
4. Narcisism	2.60	1.12	-0.30**	0.62**	0.57**	(0.89)		
5. Machiavellianism	1.92	1.14	-0.25**	0.76**	0.72**	0.66**	(0.92)	
6. Psychpaty	1.79	0.97	-0.25**	0.73**	0.68**	0.57**	0.72**	(0.90)

**Notes:** *N* = 241; \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ . Cronbach's  $\alpha$  are in brackets

Variables CWBI	$\beta$	SE	LLCI-ULCI
Narcissism	0.28**	0.04	0.20, 0.35
Micro-events (Narc*events)	-0.34**	-0.08	-0.50, -0.19
	-0.58**	-0.08	-0.73, -0.43
	$R^2 = 0.49, F_{(3, 237)} = 64.69$		
Machiavellianism	0.31**	0.03	0.25, 0.38
Micro-events (Mac*events)	-0.32**	-0.07	-0.45, -0.19
	-0.55**	-0.07	-0.69, -0.42
	$R^2 = 0.57, F_{(3, 237)} = 122.08$		
Psychopathy	0.34**	0.05	0.24, 0.43
Micro-events (psic*events)	-0.29**	-0.07	-0.43, -0.15
	-0.57**	-0.09	-0.75, -0.38
	$R^2 = 0.57 F_{(3, 237)} = 87.74$		

Notes:  $N = 241$ ; \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$

**Table 2.** Moderating role of micro-daily events on the relationship between the DT traits and CWIs

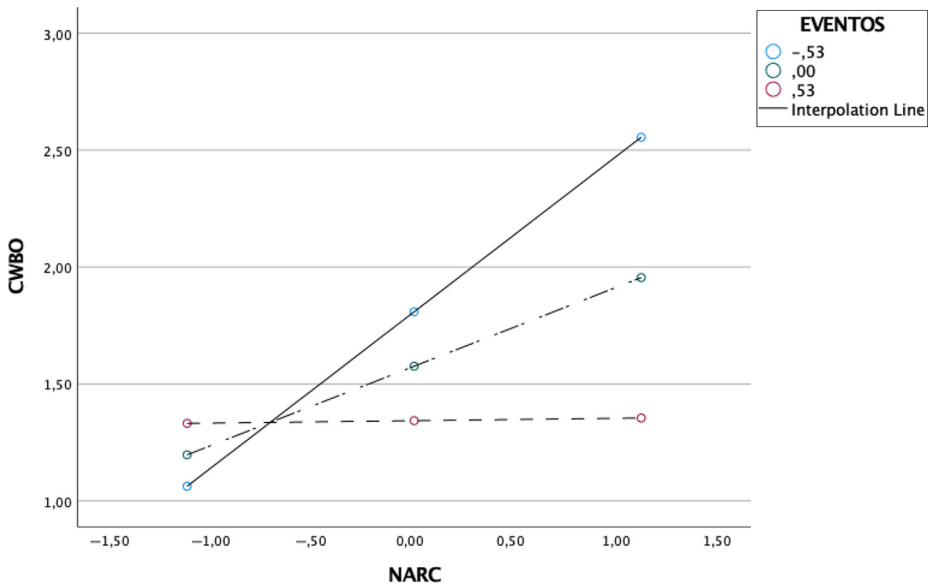


**Figure 2.** Moderating effect of micro-events in the relationship between narcissism and CWBI

evidenced a positive link with CWBI and CWBO, while micro- events showed a negative one. Thus,  $H2$  received support from the results.

$H3$  expected that micro-events would moderate the relationship between psychopathy and CWBs, such that the relationship would be stronger when the ratio of micro-events would be negative. The results showed a significant interaction effect of psychopathy with micro-events in predicting CWBI ( $B = -0.57, \beta = -0.09, \Delta R^2 = 0.08, p < 0.001$ ) and CWBO ( $B = -0.54, \beta = -0.10, \Delta R^2 = 0.06, p < 0.001$ ). We plotted the moderating effect of micro-events on CWBI and CWBO across high (+1SD), mean (M) and low (-1SD) levels of psychopathy. Regarding CWBI, [Figure 6](#) shows that the positive relation between

**Figure 3.**  
Moderating effect of micro-events in the relationship between narcissism and CWBO



Variables	$\beta$	SE	LLCI – ULCI
CWBO			
Narcissism	0.34**	0.04	0.26, 0.42
Micro-daily events (Narc*events)	-0.44**	-0.08	-0.60, -0.28
	-0.62**	-0.08	-0.78, -0.46
	$R^2 = 0.55, F_{(3, 237)} = 81.04$		
Machiavellianism	0.38**	0.04	0.31, 0.45
Micro-events (Mac*events)	-0.42**	-0.07	-0.55, -0.29
	-0.58**	-0.07	-0.73, -0.44
	$R^2 = 0.70, F_{(3, 237)} = 157.41$		
Psychopathy	0.44**	0.05	0.35, 0.54
Micro-events (psic*events)	-0.38**	-0.07	-0.52, -0.23
	-0.54**	-0.10	-0.73, -0.35
	$R^2 = 0.63, F_{(3, 237)} = 115.25$		

**Table 3.**  
Moderating role of micro-daily events on the relationship between the DT traits and CWBOs

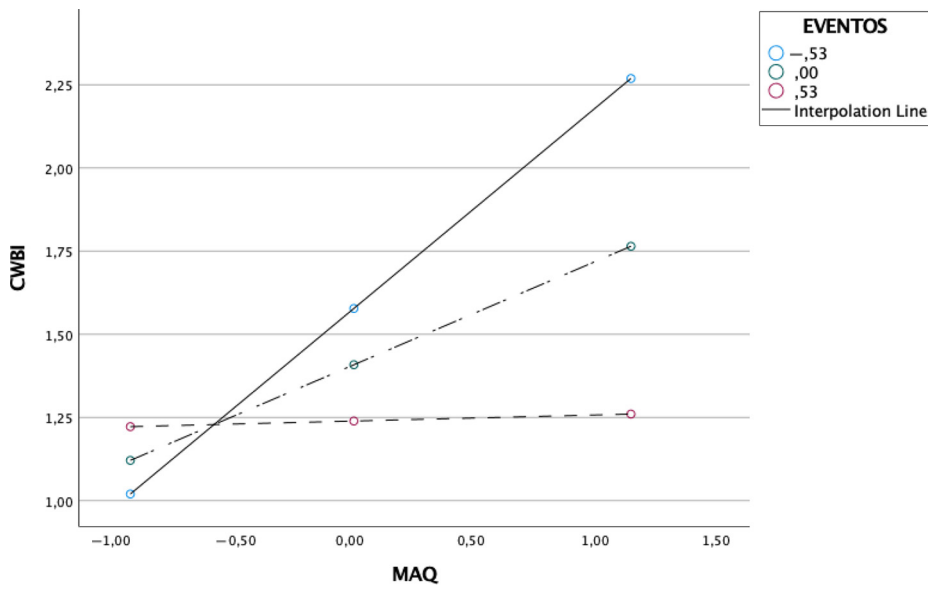
Notes:  $N = 241$ ; \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$

psychopathy and CWBI was stronger when the ratio of micro-events was negative (simple slope = 0.63,  $\beta = 0.04$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , CI95% [0.55,0.72]). Figure 7 shows the same pattern for CWBO and supports that the positive association between psychopathy and CWBO was also stronger when the ratio of micro-daily events was negative (simple slope = 0.73,  $\beta = 0.04$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , CI95% [0.64,0.81]). Plus, psychopathy showed a positive relation to CWBI and CWBO, while micro-events showed a negative one. Thus, H3 was supported.

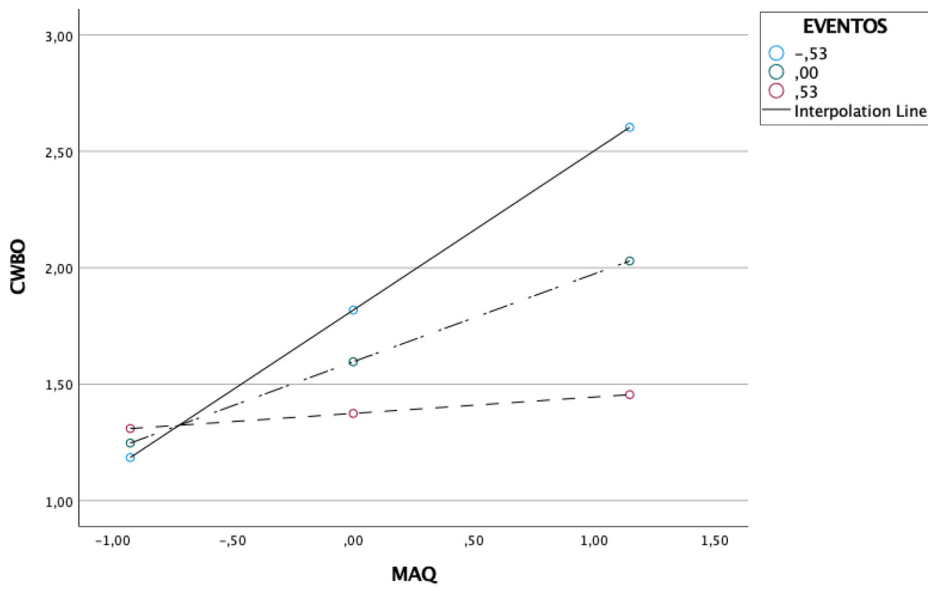
### 5. Discussion

This study adopts a social exchange perspective and the person-situation interactionist model to test the moderating role of micro-events in the relationship between the DT traits and CWBs.





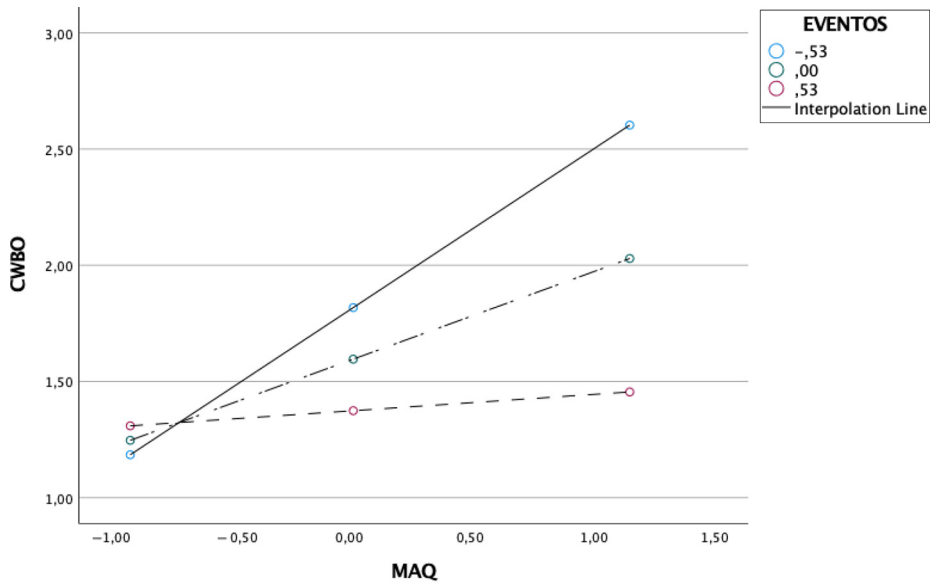
**Figure 4.**  
Moderating effect of  
micro-daily events in  
the relationship  
between  
machiavellianism  
and CWBI



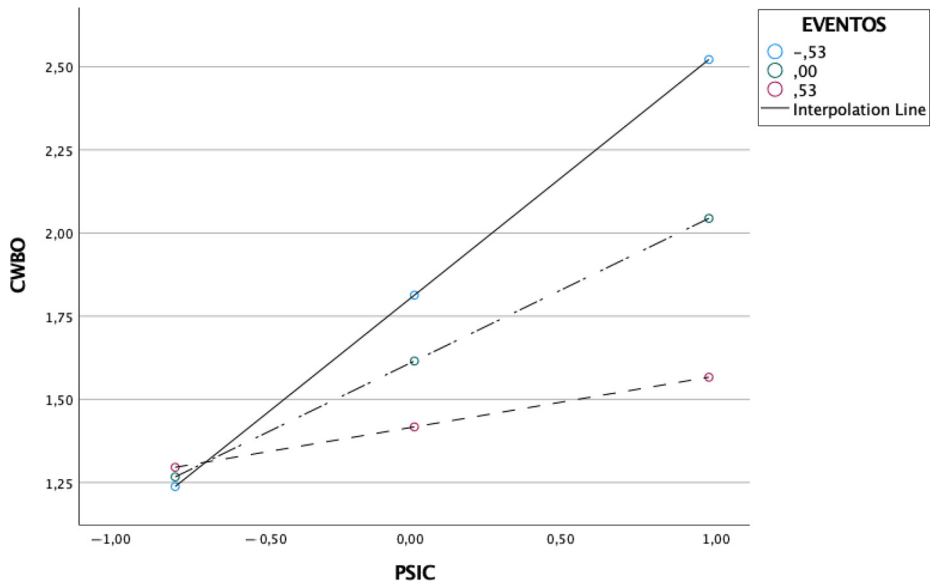
**Figure 5.**  
Moderating effect of  
micro-daily events in  
the relationship  
between  
machiavellianism  
and CWBO

First, the results demonstrate that narcissists, Machiavellians and psychopaths tend to engage more frequently in CWBI and CWBO. This link has been consistently demonstrated in several empirical studies (Forsyth *et al.*, 2012; Wilhau, 2021) and might be explained by the common “core of darkness” inherent to each dark trait, which includes callous affect and manipulation (Jones and Figueiredo, 2013). Second, we demonstrate that micro-events are

**Figure 6.**  
Moderating effect of  
micro-events in the  
relationship between  
psychopathy and  
CWBI



**Figure 7.**  
Moderating effect of  
micro-events in the  
relationship between  
psychopathy and  
CWBO



negatively related both to the DT traits and CWBs. Despite the consistent evidence of the relevance of micro-events to diverse work-related behaviors (e.g. performance, [Junça-Silva et al., 2017](#)), so far no studies are exploring it regarding CWB.

Third, the results show that the relation between the DT traits and CWBs is conditional upon situational factors, i.e. micro-events, which is in line with the call for studies of

O'Boyle *et al.* (2012). The results evidence that micro-events are a significant moderator of the relationship between the three dark traits and the two forms of CWB, in such a way that the relationship becomes weaker when the ratio of micro-events increases. That is, individuals high in narcissism, Machiavellianism and psychopathy engage less frequently in CWBs when they experience more daily uplifts than daily hassles. Hence, when the day is positive, that is, when daily uplifts exceed daily hassles, individuals with high DT traits reduce their engagement with CWBs. This is consistent with the main assumptions of the social exchange theory. Thus, situational factors, such as micro-events, may strengthen or weaken the relationship between the DT traits and CWBs. While daily hassles induce tendencies for incurring negative acts, such as manipulation, daily uplifts create tendencies toward positive actions. Therefore, the more daily uplifts, the greater the likelihood of behaviors that sustain a positive work environment, even for individuals with dark traits. Individuals with high levels of narcissism, Machiavellianism and psychopathy, by experiencing more daily uplifts, perceive their organizational environment as less threatening and provocative and thus tend to incur fewer CWBs. A positive organizational environment may inhibit the natural tendencies of individuals with dark personalities and thereby minimize their CWBs. This can happen because a positive context promotes the involvement of the individual in the workplace and instigate the search for more positive situations (Lyons *et al.*, 2019). As such, the conditions within which behavior will occur, and the strength of such situational factors, can affect the propensity for trait expression (i.e. trait activation theory; Tett and Burnett, 2003). For instance, it is more adaptive for individuals to display their dark traits in certain work contexts (e.g. unstable work contracts; Jonason *et al.*, 2014).

On the opposite, individuals who have a dark personality, when experiencing a dark day, with several daily hassles, see their “dark side” even darker, which leads them to incur more CWBs. This may be supported by the person-situation interactionist perspective. Accordingly, employees’ behaviors can be intensified or attenuated depending on the situations experienced by them and their perceived intensity. Moreover, these situations can influence the likelihood of trait expression, that is, micro-events may activate or dampen a person’s dark trait, which is also supported by the trait activation theory (Tett and Burnett, 2003). For instance, Wilhau (2021) demonstrated that the three dark traits predicted social loafing and that these relations were buffered by the team member exchange. Likewise, ul Shuja *et al.* (2021) showed that the dark traits were related to the time banditry behavior and that the work ethical context attenuated such relations.

Thus, we demonstrate that the context in which the individual is significant as he/she tends to behave according to it. Individuals’ dark behaviors are more frequent when the context is dark, which is in line with the trait activation theory. Moreover, individuals with a high dark personality, when experiencing a positive ratio of micro-events, may perceive a strategic advantage in maintaining good standing by engaging in fewer CWBs, thereby allowing them to strengthen their vantage point and consolidate future opportunities to exploit the organization. Overall, even the dark personalities value a positive working day and gratefulness may arise, decreasing their natural tendencies to perform negative behaviors, such as the counterproductive ones.

### 5.1 Theoretical and practical implications

This study has several implications for individuals and organizations. First, it is important to understand the relationship between the DT, micro-events and CWBs. It appears to be relevant to use DT measures in recruitment and selection, once it can avoid dramatic losses for organizations, such as financial losses (resulting from fraud) or denigrating the

organizational image (through harassment or discrimination). As such, managers may benefit from assessing the potential candidates' levels of DT before selecting them – for instance, through the dirty dozen.

Moreover, organizations may consider relevant delineating strategies to create conditions for the occurrence of daily uplifts, as these events may decrease the tendency to perform CWB, even for individuals with high DT traits. For instance, managers may create informal moments to use humor at work or to informally talk to their employees. On the opposite, managers may also consider it useful to prevent some kinds of daily hassles (e.g. perceived unfairness from supervisors, gossip or others) and help their employees to better manage those negative situations hard to avoid, for instance, through coping strategies, mindfulness and positive reappraisal to events. These strategies are effective when dealing with daily hassles and stressful events (Naveed *et al.*, 2021).

Additionally, it is important to understand how micro-events can be used as a socialization strategy to better integrate the new employees into the organizational context, taking advantage of their added value and mitigating their negative impact.

### 5.2 Limitations and future directions

Despite the positive features of this study, it has some limitations. First, the small sample size means that these results should be generalized with caution. Second, the use of self-reported measures may account for the common method bias, which was minimized through the confirmatory factor analysis. Moreover, as Conway and Lance (2010) noted, self-reports are a suitable method to collect data from internal events and individual traits, as micro-events and DT are. Also, the fact that data was collected cross-sectional is a limitation because it may account for the common method bias (Podsakoff, 2017). Daily events must be collected at various time points to understand the existing fluctuations. Therefore, future studies could replicate this study through a longitudinal or daily design.

## 6. Conclusions

These results add to the existing literature on the DT, micro-events and their impact on CWBs; to date, this is the first study exploring the role of micro-events as a boundary condition of the relationship between the DT and CWBs. The results emphasize the importance of situational factors for the activation of the dark core that characterizes individuals with high dark traits. The more negative situations experienced, the greater the darkness activation, which is translated into more frequent CWBs. On the opposite, daily uplifts appear to buffer the dark core of the employees' DT, resulting in fewer CWBs. Hence, even dark individuals appear to be context-sensitive, and thus, their dark behaviors may be attenuated when good things occur to them, as the study shows that when employees experience more daily uplifts than daily hassles, their counterproductive work behaviors significantly decrease.

## References

- Amabile, T.M., Barsade, S.G., Mueller, J.F., and Staw, B.M. (2005), "Affect and creativity at work", *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 50, pp. 367-403, doi: [10.2189/asqu.2005.50.3.367](https://doi.org/10.2189/asqu.2005.50.3.367).
- Boddy, C.R. (2010), "Corporate psychopaths and organizational type", *Journal of Public Affairs*, Vol. 10 No. 4, pp. 300-312, doi: [10.1002/pa.365](https://doi.org/10.1002/pa.365).
- Boddy, C.R. (2014), "Corporate psychopaths, conflict, employee affective well-being and counterproductive work behaviour", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 121 No. 1, pp. 107-121, doi: [10.1007/s10551-013-1688-0](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-013-1688-0).

- Conway, J.M. and Lance, C.E. (2010), "What reviewers should expect from authors regarding common method bias in organizational research", *Journal of Business and Psychology*, Vol. 25 No. 3, pp. 325-334, doi: [10.1007/s10869-010-9181-6](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10869-010-9181-6).
- Cropanzano, R. and Dasborough, M. T. (2015). "Dynamic models of well-being: implications of affective events theory for expanding current views on personality and climate", *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, Vol. 24 No. 6, pp. 844-847, doi: [10.1080/1359432X.2015.1072245](https://doi.org/10.1080/1359432X.2015.1072245)
- Cropanzano, R. and Mitchell, M.S. (2005), "Social exchange theory: an interdisciplinary review", *Journal of Management*, Vol. 31 No. 6, pp. 874-900, doi: [10.1177/0149206305279602](https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206305279602).
- Forsyth, D.R., Banks, G.C. and McDaniel, M.A. (2012), "A meta-analysis of the Dark Triad and work behavior: a social exchange perspective", *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 97 No. 3, p. 557, doi: [10.1037/a0025679](https://doi.org/10.1037/a0025679).
- Hare, R.D. (1999), *Without Conscience: The Disturbing World of the Psychopaths Among Us*, Guilford, New York, NY.
- Jonason, P.K. and Webster, G.D. (2010), "The dirty dozen: a concise measure of the dark triad", *Psychological Assessment*, Vol. 22 No. 2, pp. 420-432, doi: [10.1037/a0019265](https://doi.org/10.1037/a0019265).
- Jonason, P.K., Slomski, S. and Partyka, J. (2012), "The Dark Triad at work: how toxic employees get their way", *Personality and Individual Differences*, Vol. 52 No. 3, pp. 449-453, doi: [10.1016/j.paid.2011.11.008](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2011.11.008).
- Jonason, P.K., Wee, S., Li, N.P. and Jackson, C. (2014), "Occupational niches and the Dark Triad traits", *Personality and Individual Differences*, Vol. 69, pp. 119-123, doi: [10.1016/j.paid.2014.05.024](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2014.05.024).
- Jones, D.N. and Figueredo, A.J. (2013), "The core of darkness: uncovering the heart of the Dark Triad", *European Journal of Personality*, Vol. 27 No. 6, pp. 521-531, doi: [10.1002/per.1893](https://doi.org/10.1002/per.1893).
- Jones, D.N. and Paulhus, D.L. (2010), "Different provocations trigger aggression in narcissists and psychopaths", *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, Vol. 1 No. 1, pp. 12-18, doi: [10.1177/1948550609347591](https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550609347591).
- Jones, D.N. and Paulhus, D.L. (2014), "Introducing the short dark triad (SD3): a brief measure of dark personality traits", *Assessment*, Vol. 21 No. 1, pp. 28-41, doi: [10.1177/1073191113514105](https://doi.org/10.1177/1073191113514105).
- Judge, T.A., LePine, J.A. and Rich, B.L. (2006), "Loving yourself abundantly: relationship of the narcissistic personality to self- and other perceptions of workplace deviance, leadership, and task and contextual performance", *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 91 No. 4, pp. 762-776, doi: [10.1037/0021-9010.91.4.762](https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.91.4.762).
- Junça-Silva, A., Caetano, A. and Lopes, R.R. (2017), "Daily uplifts, well-being and performance in organizational settings: the differential mediating roles of affect and work engagement", *Journal of Happiness Studies*, Vol. 18 No. 2, pp. 591-606, doi: [10.1007/s10902-016-9740-2](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-016-9740-2).
- Junça-Silva, A., Caetano, A. and Lopes, R.R. (2020), "A working day in the life of employees: development and validation of the scale for daily hassles and uplifts at work", *TPM - Testing, Psychometrics, Methodology in Applied Psychology*, Vol. 27 No. 2, pp. 221-250, doi: [10.4473/TPM27.2.5](https://doi.org/10.4473/TPM27.2.5).
- Kashy, D.A. and DePaulo, B.M. (1996), "Who lie?", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 70 No. 5, pp. 1037-1051, doi: [10.1037/0022-3514.70.5.1037](https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.70.5.1037).
- Lata, M. and Chaudhary, R. (2021), "Workplace spirituality and experienced incivility at work: modeling dark triad as a moderator", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 174 No. 3, pp. 645-667, doi: [10.1007/s10551-020-04617-y](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-020-04617-y).
- Lynam, D.R. and Widiger, T.A. (2007), "Using a general model of personality to understand sex differences in the personality disorders", *Journal of Personality Disorders*, Vol. 21 No. 6, pp. 583-602.
- Lyons, M., Evans, K. and Helle, S. (2019), "Do 'dark' personality features buffer against adversity? The associations between cumulative life stress, the dark triad, and mental distress", *SAGE Open*, Vol. 9 No. 1, p. 2158244018822383, doi: [10.1177/2158244018822383](https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244018822383).

- Mischel, W. and Shoda, Y. (1995), "A cognitive-affective system theory of personality: reconceptualizing situations, dispositions, dynamics, and invariance in personality structure" *Psychological Review*, Vol. 102 No. 2, p. 246.
- Molm, L.D. (2010), "The structure of reciprocity", *Social Psychology Quarterly*, Vol. 73 No. 2, pp. 119-131, doi: [10.1177/0190272510369079](https://doi.org/10.1177/0190272510369079).
- Moore, C., Detert, J.R., Klebe Treviño, L., Baker, V.L. and Mayer, D.M. (2012), "Why employees do bad things: moral disengagement and unethical organizational behavior", *Personnel Psychology*, Vol. 65 No. 1, pp. 1-48, doi: [10.1111/j.1744-6570.2011.01237.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.2011.01237.x).
- Nathanson, C. (2008), "Exploring the dynamics of revenge", Doctoral dissertation, University of British Columbia.
- Naveed, S., Lodhi, R.N., Mumtaz, M.U. and Mustafa, F. (2021), "COVID fear and work-family conflict: a moderated mediated model of religiosity, COVID stress and social distancing", *Management Research Review*, doi: [10.1108/MRR-05-2021-0348](https://doi.org/10.1108/MRR-05-2021-0348).
- O'Boyle, E.H., Forsyth, D.R., Banks, G.C. and McDaniel, M.A. (2012), "A meta-analysis of the dark triad and work behavior: a social exchange perspective", *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 97 No. 3, pp. 557-579, doi: [10.1037/a0025679](https://doi.org/10.1037/a0025679).
- O'Boyle, E.H., Forsyth, D.R., Banks, G.C., Story, P.A. and White, C.D. (2014), "A meta-analytic test of redundancy and relative importance of the dark triad and five-factor model of personality", *Journal of Personality*, Vol. 83 No. 6, pp. 644-664, doi: [10.1111/jopy.12126](https://doi.org/10.1111/jopy.12126).
- O'Boyle, E.H., Forsyth, D.R. and O'Boyle, A.S. (2011), "Bad apples or bad barrels: an examination of group-and organizational-level effects in the study of counterproductive work behavior", *Group and Organization Management*, Vol. 36 No. 1, pp. 39-69, doi: [10.1177/1059601110390998](https://doi.org/10.1177/1059601110390998).
- Palmer, J.C., Komarraju, M., Carter, M.Z. and Karau, S.J. (2017), "Angel on one shoulder: can perceived organizational support moderate the relationship between the Dark Triad traits and counterproductive work behavior?", *Personality and Individual Differences*, Vol. 110, pp. 31-37, doi: [10.1016/j.paid.2017.01.018](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2017.01.018).
- Paulhus, D.L. and Williams, K.M. (2002), "The dark triad of personality: narcissism, machiavellianism, and psychopathy", *Journal of Research in Personality*, Vol. 36 No. 6, pp. 556-563, doi: [10.1016/S0092-6566\(02\)00505-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0092-6566(02)00505-6).
- Perri, F.S. (2011), "White-collar criminals: the kinder, gentler offender?", *Journal of Investigative Psychology and Offender Profiling*, Vol. 8 No. 3, pp. 217-241, doi: [10.1002/jip.140](https://doi.org/10.1002/jip.140).
- Podsakoff, N.P. (2017), "A tutorial on the causes, consequences, and remedies of common method biases", *MIS Q*, Vol. 35, pp. 293-334.
- Resick, C.J., Whitman, D.S., Weingarden, S.M. and Hiller, N.J. (2009), "The bright-side and the dark-side of CEO personality: examining core self-evaluations, narcissism, transformational leadership, and strategic influence", *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 94 No. 6, pp. 1365-1381, doi: [10.1037/a0016238](https://doi.org/10.1037/a0016238).
- Schmidt, F.L., Shaffer, J.A. and Oh, I.S. (2008), "Increased accuracy for range restriction corrections: implications for the role of personality and general mental ability in job and training performance", *Personnel Psychology*, Vol. 61 No. 4, pp. 827-868, doi: [10.1111/j.1744-6570.2008.00132.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.2008.00132.x).
- Smith, S.F. and Lilienfeld, S.O. (2013), "Psychopathy in the workplace: the knowns and unknowns", *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, Vol. 18 No. 2, pp. 204-218, doi: [10.1016/j.avb.2012.11.007](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2012.11.007).
- Spain, S., Harms, P. and LeBreton, J. (2014), "The dark side of personality at work", *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, Vol. 35 No. S1, pp. 41-60, doi: [10.1002/job.1894](https://doi.org/10.1002/job.1894).
- Spector, P.E. (2011), "Job satisfaction survey", available at: <http://chuma.cas.usf.edu>
- Spector, P.E., Fox, S., Penney, L.M., Bruursema, K., Goh, A. and Kessler, S. (2006), "The dimensionality of counterproductivity", *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, Vol. 68 No. 3, pp. 446-460, doi: [10.1016/j.jvb.2005.10.005](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2005.10.005).

- Spence, J.R., Ferris, D.L., Brown, D.J. and Heller, D. (2011), "Understanding daily citizenship behaviours: a social comparison perspective", *Journal of Organizational Behaviour*, Vol. 32, pp. 547-571, doi: [10.1002/job.738](https://doi.org/10.1002/job.738).
- Tett, R.P. and Burnett, D.D. (2003), "A personality trait-based interactionist model of job performance", *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 88 No. 3, pp. 500-517, doi: [10.1037/0021-9010.88.3.500](https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.88.3.500).
- ul Shuja, I., Wahab, A., Malik, H.A. and Nawab, E.S. (2021), "The impact of dark triads on employee's time banditry behavior: moderating role of islamic work ethics", *Journal of Islamic Business and Management*, Vol. 11 No. 1, pp. 168-180.
- Van Geel, M., Toprak, F., Goemans, A., Zwaanswijk, W. and Vedder, P. (2017), "Are youth psychopathic traits related to bullying? Meta-analyses on callous-unemotional traits, narcissism, and impulsivity", *Child Psychiatry and Human Development*, Vol. 48 No. 5, pp. 768-777, doi: [10.1007/s10578-016-0701-0](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10578-016-0701-0).
- Wilhau, A.J. (2021), "Dark traits, social loafing and team member exchange: who slacks and when?", *Management Research Review*, Vol. 44 No. 12, pp. 1583-1598, doi: [10.1108/MRR-10-2020-0624](https://doi.org/10.1108/MRR-10-2020-0624).
- Wu, J. and Lebreton, J.M. (2011), "Reconsidering the dispositional basis of counterproductive work behavior: the role of aberrant personality", *Personnel Psychology*, Vol. 64 No. 3, pp. 593-626, doi: [10.1111/j.1744-6570.2011.01220.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.2011.01220.x).

#### Corresponding author

Ana Junça-Silva can be contacted at: [ana\\_luisa\\_silva@iscte-iul.pt](mailto:ana_luisa_silva@iscte-iul.pt)