

Cognitive Perspective in Entrepreneurship Research: Past, Present, and Future
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**Bright and Dark Sides of the Dark Triad: Managers' Personality Traits and
Organizational Commitment**

Beate CESINGER, NDU, Austria

Katherine GUNDOLF, MBS, LabEx, France

Mat HUGHES, SBE, Loughborough University, UK

Anis KHEDHAOUIRA, MBS, LabEx, France

1. Research objective/question:

Personalities are multifaceted, they have dark and bright sides. However, over the last decades, the bright sides have been more investigated in management research. Recently, there has been an increase of interest to explore also the dark sides of personality (Miller, 2014).

One of the constructs gaining attention is the Dark Triad (DT). The DT is a subclinical personality construct that combines three primarily negative personality constructs: narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism. It has even been underlined, that in senior management positions DT personalities are overrepresented.

The objective of this research is to explore the link between DT personality traits of managers and their Organizational Commitment (OC).

2. Theoretical development:

Managers shape the firm's strategic path, and firms cannot perform without management that encourages and manages performance efforts (Miller, 2011). However, "to understand why organizations do the things they do, or why they perform the way they do, we must consider the biases and dispositions of their most powerful actors—their top executives" (Hambrick, 2007: p. 334). This idea is central to Upper Echelon Theory—that the actions of senior managers are a function of their personalities.

Recent research explores more deeply the effects of dark personality traits on the organizational level. Typical features of all three DT traits are a socially hostile character with a tendency towards selfish behaviour, emotional coldness, propensity for duplicity and aggression, and low agreeableness beyond the average level.

More specifically:

- One of the core characteristics of sub-clinical *psychopathy* is a deficient affective experience. Subclinical psychopaths are indifferent about the fate of the organization, and primarily act in their favours and not in the company's one.
- Subclinical *narcissists* are generally motivated by their needs for power and admiration rather than empathetic concern for the constituents and institutions.
- *Machiavellians* tend to choose management careers to fulfil their desire for power, money, and status. They are cold calculating and planning for the long-term.

However, individuals who score high on the DT traits are prone to be in senior management positions.

OC is a mindset concerned with the emotional attachment to and the individual identification with an organization. The so-called Three Component Model (TCM) model by Allen and Meyer (1990), includes the following three dimensions: (i) *Affective Commitment* (AC) describes an emotional attachment to, identification with and involvement in the organization; (ii) *Continuance Commitment* (CC) reflects an awareness of the costs associated with leaving, respectively the expected value of remaining with a particular organization; (iii) *Normative Commitment* (NC) refers to someone's acceptance of organizational values as well as someone's obligation to stay in the organization. Although research has widely investigated the situational antecedents of OC and its dimensions, much less attention has been given to its dispositional antecedents. A few studies have investigated the link between personality traits and OC, and even fewer have explored the relation of dark personality traits and OC.

Given the characteristics of DT personalities, we formulate following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1a: Psychopathy negatively influences senior managers' AC.

Hypothesis 1b: Psychopathy negatively influences senior managers' CC.

Hypothesis 1c: Psychopathy negatively influences senior managers' NC.

Hypothesis 2a: Narcissism negatively influences senior managers' AC.

Hypothesis 2b: Narcissism negatively influences senior managers' CC.

Hypothesis 2c: Narcissism negatively influences senior managers' NC.

Hypothesis 3a: Machiavellianism negatively influences senior managers' AC.

Hypothesis 3b: Machiavellianism negatively influences senior managers' CC.

Hypothesis 3c: Machiavellianism negatively influences senior managers' NC.

3. Methodology:

Primary data were collected by a research team between September 2014 and July 2015. A total of 451 responses were received and the final sample contains data from 394 managers from French SMEs belonging to various economic sectors.

Our dependent variable (DT personality traits) is measured as a formative construct with the three constituent dimensions and using valid items from Jonason and Webster (2010).

Our independent variable (OC) is measured as reflective dimensions using valid items for AC, CC, and NC developed by Meyer et al. (1993).

4. Results:

The OLS regression results did not show any negative effects as hypothesized but that *Narcissism* has a positive effect on *CC* and on *NC*.

5. Contribution:

These results specifically contribute to theory in the following ways: Only a few studies on Upper Echelon Theory have empirically investigated the effects of personality traits on executive work outcomes. The studies, which empirically contributed to this stream of research focused on positive personality traits while almost neglecting negative traits.

Moreover, contrary to what we expected from the extant literature, there is no negative link between DT and OC. This underlines that managers scoring higher on the DT are not necessarily less committed to their organizations than low DT-scoring managers. Thus, our results also show that concern about the consequences of negative traits may not be as severe as what is projected and expected from theory.

Furthermore, we showed a positive link between Narcissism and two types of OC. These links are a reflection of the positive upside of narcissists' desire to build a sustainable power base and embed themselves within that base, and wanting the organization to reflect their own vanity and values. Both are achieved through time and commitment to the organization as opposed to themselves only.

