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Daily Work Role Stressors and Dark Triad States

Results of Two Diary Studies

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Abstract: Organizational research on the dark triad has, so far, focused on individual differences in employees' stable tendencies to act in manipulative, grandiose, or callous ways (i.e., dark triad traits). Research on momentary expressions of Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy (i.e., dark triad states) and the work situations that may trigger them is still in its infancy. Based on the conservation of resources theory, we hypothesized that daily role ambiguity and role conflict deplete employees' daily self-control resources which, in turn, is related to the daily expression of dark triad states. To test our hypotheses, we conducted two daily diary studies across 5 and 10 workdays. Consistent with expectations, on days when employees experienced more role conflict than usual, they were more likely to express their darker side of personality. In contrast, hypotheses about the detrimental effects of daily role ambiguity and the mediating role of daily self-control depletion were not supported.

Keywords: dark triad, personality states, role stressors, self-control depletion, COR theory

The dark triad, consisting of narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism (Paulhus & Williams, 2002), has received increased attention over the past decade, both in research and practice. Given the detrimental effects of the dark triad on individuals and organizations (e.g., LeBreton et al., 2018; Muris et al., 2017; O'Boyle et al., 2012), focusing on the darker side of personality at work is highly important. So far, organizational research on the dark triad has typically emphasized the notion of "bad apples," that is, individuals with elevated levels of dark triad *traits*, ignoring its potential malleability and the likely existence of dark triad *states* (Nübold et al., 2017). Personality traits and states represent "two sides of the same coin." Whereas personality traits (i.e., between-person perspective) refer to stable or typical patterns of individuals' thoughts, emotions, and behaviors (Allport, 1955), personality states (i.e., within-person perspective) refer to the momentary experience or enactment of these features with the same content as the corresponding trait (Fleeson, 2001).

As pointed out by Judge and colleagues (2014), personality states are not any less reflective of personality than a personality trait, and the exploration of relationships between personality states and contexts is equally valid

for very brief periods as it is for longer ones. Despite the substantial relationship between personality states and their respective trait equivalents (Fleeson, 2001), within-person relationships involving personality are not necessarily identical to those at the between-person level (see, e.g., Edershile & Wright, 2019; Minbashian et al., 2010). Thus, although dark triad trait research has identified a number of (stable) antecedents (e.g., values or socioeconomic conditions; Jonason et al., 2016; Kajonius et al., 2015) and organizational boundary conditions (e.g., abusive supervision; Greenbaum et al., 2017), a state approach to the dark triad opens up the opportunity to reveal more short-term dynamics between proximal predictors like daily job experiences and dark triad expressions.

In the present study, we draw from the conservation of resources theory (COR theory; Hobfoll, 1989), as well as theorizing on links between a lack of resources and the dark triad (Hogan & Hogan, 2001), to better understand which situations lead people to express their darker side of personality at work. In two diary studies (Study 1 and Study 2), spanning 5 and 10 workdays, respectively, we investigate whether daily work role stressors (i.e., role conflict and role ambiguity; Rizzo et al., 1970) are related to daily dark triad

states at work. Role conflict and ambiguity¹ seem particularly suited as daily antecedents of dark triad state expressions using a COR theory perspective, as they are the most popular role stressors in the literature (Bowling et al., 2017), have been shown to vary substantially across workdays (Pindek et al., 2019; Rodell & Judge, 2009), and qualify as hindrance stressors (Vandenberghe et al., 2011), that is, resource-draining work demands perceived as obstacles to personal goal achievement (Cavanaugh et al., 2000). As both stressors require greater psychological expenditures to meet the expectations of one's work role, they result in a loss of available personal resources, which, in turn, may be related to expressions of one's darker side of personality. In addition to testing whether daily work role stressors are related to dark triad states at work, we follow up on the idea of resource depletion and test in Study 2 whether the loss of a particular type of personal resource, daily self-control depletion, mediates the relations between daily role stressors and dark triad states at work.

Our study contributes to the dark triad literature and research on personality states at work in three important ways. First, by demonstrating that dark personality fluctuates in relation to the experience of work role stressors, we advance our knowledge of the nature and nomological network of the dark triad at work. So far, research has only focused on stable antecedents of dark triad traits as well as their detrimental outcomes (for an overview see e.g., Furnham et al., 2013). Second, although initial research has started to showcase the importance of positive personality states at work (Debusscher et al., 2016, 2017), it has been evidenced that the factorial space of personality constructs (beyond models of positive personality) is not comprehensively covered in organizational studies (Woods & Anderson, 2016). Thus, our study complements the knowledge of positive personality states at work in a meaningful way. Finally, our findings may inform developmental human resource management procedures that go beyond the advice to filter out applicants with high levels of dark triad traits (Roulin & Bourdage, 2017) by supporting practitioners in designing jobs and crafting interventions that optimally target potential triggers of dark triad states.

Theoretical Background

Dark Triad States

The dark triad (Paulhus & Williams, 2002) comprises three distinct, yet interrelated traits (O'Boyle et al., 2012):

Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy. Importantly, these traits represent "everyday" aspects of personality (Paulhus & Williams, 2002) and should be differentiated from clinically relevant personality disorders. *Machiavellianism* is characterized by manipulative behavior and the willingness to exploit and deceive others to reach one's goals. (Subclinical) *narcissism* is characterized by grandiosity, entitlement, egotism, and feelings of superiority. (Subclinical) *psychopathy* is characterized by antisocial behavior, impulsivity, risk-seeking, and a lack of guilt, empathy, and remorse. Research has shown that the dark triad traits have the potential to cause great harm to individuals and organizations (Furnham et al., 2013; Muris et al., 2017; O'Boyle et al., 2012), including interpersonal problems and counterproductive work behavior (CWB).

Personality comprises thoughts, emotions, and behaviors (Allport, 1955). Thus, on a daily basis, dark triad states are best understood and captured as personality coming to the surface in the form of *momentary* thoughts, emotions, and actions related to Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy (Hardin & Smith, 2022). For example, momentary manipulative, strategic, and gain-oriented thinking and behavior represent concrete expressions of Machiavellianism (e.g., getting important people on one's side, keeping track of information that might be useful in the future). Current self-centered thoughts, feelings of grandiosity, and entitled behavior indicate narcissism (e.g., putting oneself into the center of attention, bragging, expecting to be treated special), whereas momentary impulsive and reckless behavior and callousness represent manifestations of psychopathy (e.g., lying, deceiving, taking revenge and manipulating others for short-term gain or pleasure).

Importantly, although at the between-person level of analysis, some of the dark triad dimensions conceptually overlap with other forms of (interpersonal) deviance at work (Muris et al., 2017; O'Boyle et al., 2012), dark personality states each comprise a unique set of momentary thoughts, emotions, and behaviors specific to the character and content of the corresponding trait (e.g., strategic manipulation, entitlement, and callous impulsivity), and thus, cannot just be considered deviant behaviors (Cohen, 2016). Although relationships on different levels are not necessarily the same, we draw on the literature on dark triad traits where necessary and appropriate, as research on dark triad states and their relation to antecedents and outcomes is lacking to date. In such cases, we assume the conceptual nature and the theoretical underlying assumptions for those associations to be similar to the ones on the trait level.

¹ In this study, we did not include role overload, which is often investigated alongside role conflict and ambiguity. The literature has been mixed with regard to its categorization as a hindrance stressor (see Vandenberghe et al., 2011), with some authors arguing for it to be a challenge stressor instead (Cavanaugh et al., 2000). Therefore, we focused on role conflict and ambiguity which are more unequivocally considered hindrance stressors (Vandenberghe et al., 2011), and thus, most relevant for our theorizing.

Situational Antecedents of Dark Triad States

So far, organizational scholars have focused on identifying situational antecedents of Big Five personality states at work. For example, task characteristics, interpersonal conflict, and customer interactions have been shown to predict employees' state of conscientiousness, agreeableness, and neuroticism (Huang & Ryan, 2011; Judge et al., 2014; Minbashian et al., 2010). Although dark triad states have not been researched in an organizational context yet, a number of diary studies have investigated constructs that map onto single behavioral aspects of dark triad states at work, such as deceptive knowledge hiding (as an aspect of Machiavellianism), daily self-promotion (as part of narcissism), and retaliatory actions (as an aspect of psychopathy) (Klotz et al., 2018; Rosen et al., 2016; Venz & Nesher Shoshan, 2022). These studies have identified interpersonal conflict (Venz & Nesher Shoshan, 2022) and experienced incivility (Rosen et al., 2016) as antecedents of such behaviors. Furthermore, a few studies in the field of personality psychology have recently investigated antecedents of state narcissism, but this research has only been conducted in non-work settings with student samples. Those findings revealed that state narcissism was higher when individuals perceived others to be warm and submissive experienced more independence and agency, and felt less stressed (Edershile & Wright, 2019; Giacomini & Jordan, 2014, 2016). This suggests that situations that highlight individuals' competence, superiority, independence, and agency may fuel the desire for narcissistic expressions (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001).

Role Stressors and Dark Triad States

In the present work, we draw on COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989) and theoretical considerations regarding the role of stressors and resource loss for the dark triad (Hogan & Hogan, 2001). COR theory offers a dynamic perspective to work stressors and resource depletion, proposing that individuals seek to protect valued resources (e.g., energy, time, effort, personal skills) that help them attain their goals. When confronted with work stressors like role conflict and role ambiguity, employees are forced to strongly draw on their resources to protect their remaining resources and maintain their well-being and functioning (Hobfoll, 1989). Whereas *role conflict* refers to situations in which employees are confronted with two or more incompatible demands or a lack of resources needed to perform a task, *role ambiguity* entails situations in which employees are uncertain as to what behavior is required from them.

Based on COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989), we propose that daily role conflict and ambiguity – hindrance stressors that hamper an employee's ability to perform tasks successfully and achieve valued goals (Cavanaugh et al., 2000) –

require the expenditure of additional resources. For example, role conflict and ambiguity may be associated with worry and more intensive information processing (Matthews & Funke, 2006), and the use of additional time and skills to fulfill one's roles. Thereby, these role stressors deplete employees' resources which, in turn, may lower the threshold to express dark triad states. For example, we suggest that employees are more likely to react with hostility, impulsivity, callousness, and antisocial behavior (i.e., state psychopathy) on days when additional resources are taxed because they are not able to fulfill incompatible tasks (i.e., daily role conflict). Likewise, on days when employees experience a lack of clarity and direction as to what is expected from them (i.e., daily role ambiguity), the loss of valued resources like time and energy may push them to engage in defensive self-enhancement and increase feelings of entitlement that restore their hurt ego (i.e., state narcissism). Furthermore, on days when employees experience role conflict or ambiguity, the loss of resources may trigger them to influence and manipulate others in order to eventually reach their personal goals (i.e., state Machiavellianism). Previous diary studies have supported the notion that hindrance stressors like task ambiguity are associated with other types of malevolence at work, such as daily CWB (Rodell & Judge, 2009; Yang & Dieffendorff, 2009).

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Daily role conflict is positively related to state (a) Machiavellianism, (b) narcissism, and (c) psychopathy.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Daily role ambiguity is positively related to state (a) Machiavellianism, (b) narcissism, and (c) psychopathy.

The Mediating Role of Daily Self-Control Depletion

We again draw on COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989) to explain more specifically *why* daily work role stressors may encourage the expression of dark triad states. Specifically, we argue that daily role conflict and role ambiguity tax employees' daily self-control as a specific key personal resource (Alarcon, 2011) because threats to one's goals require employees to draw on their self-regulatory resources in order to adapt their strategies for goal achievement and regulate their cognition, emotions, and behavior accordingly. The reduced ability to enact self-control due to the depletion of self-control resources (Baumeister et al., 2007), in turn, limits employees' capacity to invest their remaining resources into other self-regulatory activities (Hobfoll, 1989), such as the inhibition of one's dark impulses (Hogan & Hogan, 2001). Most people know that the expression of dark triad states violates social norms in

the workplace and should typically be hidden or suppressed. Thus, daily role conflict and ambiguity tax the same self-control resources that usually allow employees to inhibit or alter emotions and behaviors that may potentially hinder goal achievement (Baumeister et al., 2007). Consequently, on days with high role conflict and ambiguity, employees express dark triad notions that they are typically able to control.

A resource depletion perspective has also been supported by diary studies on the role of work stressors for workplace deviance (e.g., CWB, incivility) and conflict, suggesting that the depletion of self-control resources can explain such manifestations of self-control failure (Germeys & De Gieter, 2018; Rosen et al., 2016, 2021). These studies have evidenced, for example, that daily self-control demands at work are positively related to self-control depletion, which subsequently increases spousal conflict (Germeys & De Gieter, 2018). Furthermore, it has been shown that incivility experienced earlier in the day reduced employees' self-control which, in turn, resulted in increased instigated incivility later in the day (Rosen et al., 2016).

Hypothesis 3 (H3): The relation between daily role conflict and state (a) Machiavellianism, (b) narcissism, and (c) psychopathy is mediated by daily self-control depletion.

Hypothesis 4 (H4): The relation between daily role ambiguity and state (a) Machiavellianism, (b) narcissism, and (c) psychopathy is mediated by daily self-control depletion.

Study 1

The goal of Study 1, a daily diary study across 5 workdays, was to test the relations between daily role conflict and ambiguity with daily expressions of dark triad states at work.

Method

Participants and Procedure

Employees in Germany were contacted by a group of research assistants via various recruitment strategies, including direct recruitment at employees' workplaces, the use of personal networks, as well as the snowballing approach. Participants first completed a baseline survey online. In the following work week, we prompted participants via email (sent out at 12 p.m. Monday to Friday) to fill out the daily online surveys at the end of their workday and before the beginning of the next day. Participation was

voluntary and participants did not get reimbursed. They were instructed to complete the daily survey only on the days they actually worked.

Out of 153 employees who were approached, 100 filled in the daily surveys, each providing at least two daily surveys for our final analysis. On average, participants filled out 3.99 daily surveys out of five. Participants' ages ranged from 22 to 65 ($M = 43.12$, $SD = 12.52$); 44% were male, 50% were female and 6% did not indicate their gender. Most participants indicated working full-time (70%), the others worked part-time (24%; minimum of 7 hours/week) or did not indicate their employment status (6%). The average number of work hours per week was 38.63 ($SD = 12.09$). The average job tenure was 10.45 years ($SD = 9.75$). A supervisory position was held by 24% of participants and the average self-reported job status on a scale from 1 (= *entry level*) to 7 (= *executive level*) was 3.79 ($SD = 1.47$). Job descriptions included teacher, engineer, and policeman. The study was approved by the ethical review committee of the third author's institution.

Measures

Participants' demographics were assessed in the baseline survey; role stressors and dark triad states were assessed in the daily surveys. Participants were instructed to judge the daily items with regard to their current workday. As is common for diary studies, items for the daily surveys were slightly adapted to the day context by adding the word "Today" and wording the items in the past tense. We used German versions of validated questionnaires for our constructs, and participants answered all questions on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. Within-person α s were calculated using the method described by Geldhof and colleagues (2014).

Dark Triad States

We used a German translation of the 12-item Dirty Dozen scale by Jonason and Webster (2010) to measure dark triad states. An example item for Machiavellianism is "Today, I manipulated others to get my way," for narcissism, "Today, I wanted others to pay attention to me," and for psychopathy, "Today, I was callous or insensitive." Within-person α s were .62 for Machiavellianism, .62 for psychopathy, and .84 for narcissism.

Daily Role Stressors

Daily role conflict and role ambiguity were assessed with the four highest-loading items of the respective sub-scales developed by Rizzo and colleagues (1970). An example item for role conflict is "Today, I received an assignment without adequate resources and materials to execute it." An example item for role ambiguity is "Today, I knew

exactly what was expected of me” (reverse coded). Within-person α s were .76 for role conflict and .84 for role ambiguity.

Analysis

Due to the nested structure of our data (i.e., daily observations were nested within persons), we conducted fixed-slope multilevel path analyses with Mplus7 (Muthén & Muthén, 2017). Following the unconflated multilevel modeling (UMM) approach of Preacher and colleagues (2010), we centered both predictor variables (i.e., daily role conflict and role ambiguity) at the respective person mean to exclude all between-person variance from our analyses and included the person means as predictors at level 2 to account for between-person differences. We tested one overall model with both stressors as predictors and dark personality states as outcomes. We also performed multilevel confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) on the variables in our model to demonstrate their uniqueness. To evaluate model fit, we applied the cut-off criteria for fit indexes as suggested by Hu and Bentler (1998), that is, RMSEA < .06 and CFI > .95/.90 for good/acceptable model fit, respectively (Hu & Bentler, 1998). Although the CFI of the five-factor model was only approximating the value of .90, results showed that it had a better fit [$\chi^2(160, 381) = 350.23, p = .00, CFI = .880, RMSEA = .056$] than a two-factor model combining all dark triad states and both stressors [$\chi^2(169, 381) = 735.81, p = .00, CFI = .642, RMSEA = .094$], or a one-factor model combining all constructs [$\chi^2(170, 381) = 1,211.03, p = .00, CFI = .342, RMSEA = .127$].

Results

Means, standard deviations, intraclass correlations (ICCs), and between- and within-person correlations are depicted in the Electronic Supplementary Material (ESM 1) in Table E1. ICCs for state Machiavellianism (.50), state narcissism (.64), and state psychopathy (.54) indicate that 36–50% of their variance resides within-person, evidencing substantial within-person fluctuations of these constructs. We regressed each dark triad state on the two work role stressors. Results of the multilevel analysis (presented in Table E2a in ESM 1) showed that daily role conflict positively predicted daily psychopathy ($\gamma = .24, p < .001$) and Machiavellianism ($\gamma = .11, p = .03$), but not narcissism ($\gamma = .05, p = .36$). Overall, work role stressors explained 6% of the variance (R^2_{within}) in psychopathy, 1% in Machiavellianism, and 2% in narcissism. Thus, H1a and H1c were supported, whereas H1b was not. Daily role ambiguity was not significantly related to daily Machiavellianism ($\gamma = .00, p = .95$), psychopathy ($\gamma = -.05, p = .34$), and narcissism ($\gamma = -.09, p = .06$). Thus, H2a–H2c were not confirmed.

None of the between-level effects was significant (all $p > .09$).

Study 2

Study 2, a daily diary study across 10 workdays, had the objective to replicate the results of Study 1 and extend it by examining the mediating role of daily self-control in the relationship between daily role conflict and ambiguity and daily expressions of dark triad states.

Method

Participants and Procedure

Data collection for Study 2 also took place in Germany. The recruitment approach was similar to Study 1. Participants took part voluntarily, without a reward. A prerequisite for participation was that employees worked full-time on 10 consecutive workdays. Out of 138 participants contacted through the research assistants' network, 93 filled out the daily surveys, all providing at least two daily responses. On average, participants filled out 8.66 daily surveys out of 10. The sample comprised 47.9% females and 50.0% males; 2 participants did not report their gender. Participants' age ranged from 21 to 64 years ($M = 30.33, SD = 9.16$). The majority (80.9%) of participants were regular employees, 10.6% had a supervisory role, and 8.5% indicated another employment status (e.g., freelancer). Mean job tenure was about 5.6 years ($SD = 7.79$). Participants completed the baseline questionnaire including the demographic questions at least 1 day before the first daily questionnaire was sent out. Participants received an email at 3 p.m. local time with a link to the daily questionnaire for 10 subsequent working days, starting with a Monday. Study 2 was approved by the ethical review committee of the first author's home institution (ECP-164_14_03_2016).

Measures

Our measurement approach was similar to Study 1 and daily role stressors and dark triad states were assessed in the same way. Within-person α s were .77 for role conflict and .78 for role ambiguity, .74 for Machiavellianism, .84 for narcissism, and .46 for psychopathy.

Daily Self-Control Depletion

We used a German 5-item version (Bertrams et al., 2011) of the state self-control capacity scale by Ciarocco and colleagues (2007) to assess the daily depletion of self-control. The scale has been commonly used in organizational diary studies (e.g., Wehrt et al., 2020). Participants were explicitly instructed to judge the items with regard to the current day. However, items were worded in the present tense. An

example item is “I feel mentally exhausted.” The within-person α was .86.

Analysis

The analysis approach was the same as in Study 1. In addition to the two predictor variables, we also centered the mediator, daily self-control depletion, at the person mean to ensure that these variables contain within-person variance only (Preacher et al., 2010). We tested one overall model with both stressors as predictors, daily self-control depletion as the mediator, and the three dark personality states as outcomes. Multilevel CFAs showed that a six-factor model had a better fit [$\chi^2(237, 795) = 532.60, p = .00, CFI = .931, RMSEA = .037$] than a three-factor model combining all dark triad traits, both stressors, and depletion as the third factor [$\chi^2(249, 795) = 1,506.39, p = .00, CFI = .708, RMSEA = .074$], or a one-factor model [$\chi^2(252, 795) = 4,104.07, p = .00, CFI = .104, RMSEA = .128$]. According to Hu and Bentler (1998), the six-factor model showed an adequate fit on all indices.

Results

Means, standard deviations, ICCs, and between- and within-person correlations are depicted in Table E1 in ESM 1. ICCs for state Machiavellianism (.38), state narcissism (.60), and state psychopathy (.50) indicate that 40–62% of their variance resides within-person, again evidencing substantial within-person fluctuations of these constructs. Results of the multilevel analyses (see Table E2a–E2b in ESM 1) showed that daily role conflict positively predicted daily Machiavellianism ($\gamma = .15, p < .001$), narcissism ($\gamma = .12, p = .001$) and psychopathy ($\gamma = .10, p = .008$), thus, confirming H1a–H1c. Daily role ambiguity was not related to daily Machiavellianism ($\gamma = -.04, p = .238$) and psychopathy ($\gamma = .03, p = .333$), but was, opposite to our expectations, found to be negatively related to daily narcissism ($\gamma = -.12, p = .001$). Thus, H2a–H2c were not supported. Overall, work role stressors explained 4% of the variance (R^2_{within}) in Machiavellianism, 3% in narcissism, and 1% in psychopathy. Furthermore, the results of the mediation analyses showed that none of the indirect effects of daily role conflict and ambiguity on Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy via the depletion of daily self-control were significant, neither at the within nor between level of analysis (all $p > .11$). Inspecting the direct effects, we found that daily role conflict and ambiguity were positively related to daily self-control depletion ($\gamma = .16$ and $\gamma = .12$, respectively, $p < .001$), but self-control depletion was not related to Machiavellianism ($\gamma = -.01, p = .87$), narcissism ($\gamma = -.04, p = .24$), and psychopathy ($\gamma = -.02, p = .46$). Thus, H3a–H3c were not supported.

Discussion

In two diary studies, we found that on days when employees experienced more role conflict than usual, they were more likely to express the darker side of their personality, both in terms of state Machiavellianism and psychopathy. This was also the case for state narcissism, but only in Study 2. By identifying role conflict as a situational correlate of dark triad states at work, we complement previous studies on dark triad traits at the between-person level as well as research on work experiences that elicit positive personality states. We thus contribute to a more holistic understanding of personality at work. Furthermore, these findings are in line with the literature on other types of daily malevolence at work, showing that daily work stressors and adverse working conditions are related to daily counterproductivity (Rodell & Judge, 2009; Yang & Dieffendorff, 2009).

Positive relationships between daily role ambiguity and dark triad states were not confirmed in our studies. These findings may indicate that different types of stressors may be more or less relevant for triggering different dark triad states, calling for nuanced investigations of different antecedents. For example, one reason for role conflict to be a more relevant predictor for dark triad states than role ambiguity may lie in its stronger interpersonal character, considering that dark triad states represent a form of interpersonal deviance. This is in line with research on conceptually related constructs, such as deceptive knowledge hiding (as an aspect of Machiavellianism) and retaliatory actions (as an aspect of psychopathy), which have been shown to be predicted by interpersonal conflict (Venz & Neshor Shoshan, 2022) and experienced incivility (Rosen et al., 2016). Together, these findings point to the important role interpersonal stressors at work may play for dark triad states.

Furthermore, contrary to our expectations, we found in Study 2 that daily role ambiguity was negatively related to the expression of daily narcissism, indicating that on days when role ambiguity was high, people expressed less narcissism. A potential reason may lie in the conceptual make-up of narcissism, involving a complex interplay of a grandiose self-view and vulnerability (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). On the one hand, experiences that may potentially represent an ego-threat (such as role stress) may lead to defensive self-enhancement (see Sedikides & Gregg, 2008), a key component of narcissism; on the other hand, following the idea of narcissism as a regulatory system (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001), situations that threaten individuals' competence and superiority (such as role stress) may be linked to less striving for narcissistic displays. Accordingly, a study by Giacomini and Jordan (2016) found, for example, that state narcissism was actually lower on days when people experienced greater stress.

Finally, our hypothesis regarding the mediating role of daily self-control depletion was not supported. However, in line with previous diary studies on the effect of work stressors on deviance and interpersonal conflict via resource depletion (Germeys & De Gieter, 2018; Rosen et al., 2016, 2021), we found that daily role conflict and ambiguity were both positively related to daily self-control depletion. However, surprisingly and in contrast to these studies, self-control depletion was not related to the expression of dark triad states. At an operational level, this may be due to the specific wording of the self-control depletion items in our study, which were formulated in the present tense. Thus, our measurement of self-control depletion may have captured the construct as an outcome of dark triad states during work rather than as a predictor. However, as participants were explicitly instructed to judge all self-control depletion items with regard to the current day, this finding may also rather indicate that the depletion of resources does not play a relevant role in the expression of dark triad states, in contrast to different types of deviance at work, such as CWB or incivility. A possible alternative mechanism to this self-control failure perspective could lie in motivational aspects: hindrance stressors may not only deplete personal resources (as tested in Study 2) but may also motivate people to react with dark triad states to protect and replenish personal resources (e.g., to regain time or rebuild one's ego), and, thus, may serve as a deliberate problem-focused coping strategy to deal with goal threats (Hobfoll, 1989). In addition, emotions may serve as a mechanism that translates work stressors into dark triad states. Deviant behaviors may serve as an emotion-focused coping strategy as emotions may provide a cathartic release for employees who faced burdensome work situations (Spector & Fox, 2002), as evidenced by several diary studies (Koopman et al., 2020; Rodell & Judge, 2009; Venz & Neshor Shoshan, 2022; Yang & Dieffendorff, 2009). Thus, the experience of role stress, leading to negative emotions like helplessness, humiliation, frustration, and anger may be particularly relevant for stimulating Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy, respectively. Such emotions may push employees to engage in manipulative, egoistic, and callous behaviors as complementary retaliatory acts to "repair the damage" and reduce those negative feelings (Spector & Fox, 2002).

Limitations and Future Research

Our work has a number of limitations. First, our findings might be biased or restricted in that our findings solely relied on self-reports and, thus, may suffer from common-method bias. Furthermore, some of the daily reliabilities of our measures were rather low. Despite the benefits

of other-reports in personality assessments, they are, due to practical reasons, still not common practice in diary studies in the work context. Future studies could additionally assess objective data on work stressors or other situational antecedents of dark personality expressions at work and draw on other reports to assess dark triad states (e.g., from colleagues, supervisors, or subordinates). Related to the issue of self-reports, we did not collect data on day-specific work hours and we did not check whether participants actually had worked on days when they responded to the survey (however, we made clear to participants that the study was on their work experiences and we collected timestamps to ensure that participants completed surveys in the specified time frames). Moreover, all of the role ambiguity items were reversely formulated. Although the Rizzo and colleagues (1970) scale is well-established and widely used in stress research, the fact that the items actually measure role clarity and not ambiguity has been criticized (Bowling et al., 2017) and may potentially explain the nonsignificant findings for this variable. For example, a meta-analysis by Gilboa and colleagues (2008) on work demand stressors and job performance found smaller effect sizes for the Rizzo and colleagues (1970) scales than those obtained using other scales to assess the same stressor. Future research should address these limitations.

Second, as we assessed employees' work experiences and expressions of dark triad states only once per day and our analyses are cross-sectional in nature, we cannot draw any conclusions about causality. Although we believe that the effects of daily role stressors on dark triad states are rather immediate (i.e., are most likely to occur within a day), we tested whether previous day role stressors predict changes in dark triad states on the next day (see Table E3 in ESM 1) to provide an approximation of causality. This analysis did not yield any significant findings, however (an exception is the association of previous day role ambiguity with decreases in state narcissism). This may not be surprising, considering that this analysis involves a time lag of one full day, including the night in which resources could be replenished and another full working day on which new experiences can be made. Thus, lagged effects include a range of additional influences which could dilute immediate effects.

In any case, it might be argued that based on their personality (states), employees may perceive situations in a certain way or may even select, create, or modify situations in accordance with their personality (Roberts et al., 2003). Thus, although we believe that this is less likely from a theoretical perspective, it might be that on days when employees act, for example, more manipulative, entitled, or callous, they either perceive or provoke more role conflict and ambiguity than on days when their dark triad states are low. When testing the reversed lagged effects, we found

significant results for role ambiguity and Machiavellianism as well as role ambiguity and psychopathy, indicating that prior day Machiavellianism and psychopathy were associated with increases in perceived role ambiguity on the next day (see Table E4 in ESM 1). Although there is no clear and consistent pattern of reversed lagged effects across days, future experience sampling studies should systematically investigate the direction of effects by assessing role stressors and dark triad states several times a day. Furthermore, experimental studies could manipulate role stressors (e.g., by using scenarios and conflicting or ambiguous task instructions) but also personality states (e.g., by priming people through letting them write about recent expressions of dark triad states), thereby providing evidence for true and not only Granger causality.

Third, we only focused on dark triad states as a reaction to role stressors and did not include more positive or functional reactions to these work demands, such as job crafting or voice behavior. Thus, we cannot draw any conclusions about the relative frequency of dark triad states as compared to positive personality states (e.g., conscientiousness) as adaptive reactions to work stressors. For example, dark triad states could be shown more frequently in reaction to work stressors by people with higher trait levels in the dark triad (e.g., in terms of person-by-situation interactions; Mischel & Shoda, 1995). Future research could explore systematically which additional situational experiences at work are relevant for triggering employees with elevated levels of dark triad traits.

Practical Implications

Our findings suggest that it may be important for organizations to reduce daily role stressors, particularly role conflict, which employees may experience on a day-to-day basis, to prevent dark triad expressions at work. Job design may play a particularly important role here. Organizations could minimize role conflict by ensuring that employees have the necessary resources to complete their assignments and that different entities within the organization align their demands on employees. Role ambiguity could be reduced by providing employees with clearer objectives and goals and stronger guidance from supervisors and colleagues.

Electronic Supplementary Material

The electronic supplementary material is available with the online version of the article at <https://doi.org/10.1027/2151-2604/a000505>

ESM 1. Table E1: Means, standard deviations, intraclass correlations (ICCs), and between- and within-person correlations. Table E2a–E2b: Results of the multilevel analyses.

Table E3: Multilevel Fixed Slope Path Analyses Predicting T1 Daily Dark Triad States From T0 Daily Role Stressors and Self-control (SC) Depletion Controlling for T0 Daily Dark Triad States (Study 2). **Table E4:** Multilevel Fixed Slope Path Analyses Predicting T1 Daily Role Stressors From T0 Daily Dark Triad States Controlling for T0 Daily Role Stressors (Study 2).

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