

Counterproductive Work Behaviors in Organizations: A Research on the Effect of the Dark Triad

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Abstract: This study aims to examine whether there is a significant relationship between the counterproductive work behaviors of organizational employees and the states of Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy, which are expressed as the dark triad in the literature, and if there is a significant relationship, to determine in what direction and at what level Machiavellianism, narcissism and psychopathy affect counterproductive work behaviors. In line with this purpose, data were obtained from the employees of a tourism company operating in Antalya province of Turkey by applying the survey method. Internal consistency reliability, composite reliability, convergent validity, and divergent validity tests were conducted for these data. The research hypotheses were tested by estimating the structural equation model with the least squares method. As a consequence of the analyses, it was found that narcissism and psychopathy significantly increased counterproductive work behaviors in employees, while Machiavellianism had no statistically significant effect on counterproductive work behaviors.

Keywords: Dark triad, counterproductive work behaviors, Machiavellianism, narcissism, psychopathy, personality

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INTRODUCTION

In order to maintain and increase the 21st century's inevitable necessity of competitiveness, organizations follow modern management and implement it in practice. Organizations need to adopt stances that can boost their competitiveness by keeping their existing position and increasing profits. Therefore, organizational managers focus more on employee outcomes. Although numerous reasons can cause these outputs to decrease or rise, the literature identifies unproductive work practices as one of the most influential. These behaviors, which are grouped as abuse, deviation from production, sabotage, theft, and withdrawal, include actions such as insulting, belittling, ignoring, intimidating, threatening, deliberately not doing things in the desired way, doing things incompletely or incorrectly, underperforming, procrastinating, deliberately misusing goods and belongings belonging to organizational members or the organization, making attempts to steal goods, not coming to work on time, leaving work early and taking false reports. It is evident that these activities can do significant harm to the organization and its personnel. Therefore, when we focus on the factors that can trigger such actions, we see that Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy, which are referred to as the dark triad in the literature, come to the fore. The common characteristics of these structures are selfishness, superficial human relations, interest, and benefits orientation, disharmony, manipulation, and goal orientation. Within this scope, this research aims to examine the existence of a possible relationship between Machiavellianism, narcissism and psychopathy, and counterproductive work behaviors. The research was conducted on personnel exposed to the same organizational climate for this objective. By minimizing counterproductive work behaviors as much as possible, both performance and organizational climate can be protected in organizational methods. This research was conducted considering that the dark triad may also affect counterproductive work behaviors that hinder individual and group outcomes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Machiavellianism, Narcissism, Psychopathy (Dark Triad)

Machiavellianism is the view based on the words of Niccolo Machiavelli, originally an Italian philosopher and considered the founder of history and political science, that “the end justifies the means” (Geis & Moon 1981). This is the most basic definition that is

popularly known. Some other definitions use the following statement; Machiavellianism is defined as a tendency to manipulate others, a low opinion of others, and a belief that unfair practices are necessary for success (Filipkowski & Derbis 2020). According to Christie & Geis (1970), Machiavellianism is a process of social influence, and politics, power, and behaviors that influence people can naturally be used to achieve the desired goal. Chen (2010) pointed out that Machiavellianism is a strategy of social conduct that involves manipulating others for personal gain. Although these behaviors are not moral, they can manipulate the masses (Guterman 1970). Machiavellian individuals use other people for their own success (Ang 2000). According to Machiavellianism, although the way to achieve success in organizational behavior is not to recognize rules and regulations, it is necessary to behave ethically in bargaining and especially in governmental situations. Christie & Geis (1970) stated that Machiavellian individuals do not recognize social and moral rules and approach events from the perspective of self-interest. This behavior is not a complete absence of morality but rather the application of one's own moral code inside a distinct ethical framework. Besides, it is also said that leaders being Machiavellian is beneficial for organizational success. Machiavellians are highly skilled at analyzing the situation and coming up with winning competitive strategies. In their study, Rehman and Shahnawaz (2018) propose that Machiavellians engage in unethical behavior; however, when work autonomy is introduced as a moderator, this association disappears. Besides, unlike others, Machiavellians prefer not to put extra effort into work because they believe that they will not be overpaid for it. There are many criticisms of the Machiavellian perspective. They have been heavily criticized, especially on ethics. Especially in the workplace, individuals with Machiavellian behavior can be known as selfish, selfish, deceitful, and opportunistic who do not recognize anyone when it is in their own interest. This is very detrimental to the success of the organization. Machiavelli's ideas have been criticized more than other politicians. In some commentaries, he has been described as a teacher of evils and a pragmatist politician (Galie & Bopst 2006). Özsoy & Ardiç (2017) put forward six key features related to Machiavellianism. These are:

- Lying and cheating, if necessary for personal gain,
- Trying to influence people who seem important,
- Telling people what they want to hear instead of telling them

the truth,

- Not trusting anyone completely and seeing them as dangerous,
- Not sharing everything with everyone,
- A tendency to manipulate.

Machiavellianism is a concept in itself that is compatible with the concepts of narcissism and psychopathy (Paulhus & Williams 2002). Together these three concepts are called the dark triad. These are narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism. Basically, they are perceived as close philosophies, but there are distinct differences between them. Selfishness, self-interest, self-serving, manipulation, and disharmony are common traits. However, narcissism is defined as a personality disorder (Campbell et al., 2011). Özsoy & Ardiç (2017) stated that in order for a person to be considered narcissistic, the sense of authority, looking down on other people, being closed to criticism, selfishness, exhibitionism, self-admiration, the desire to be the center of attention, the habit of lying and the desire to obtain power should be seen on that person. Grandiosity, vanity, and arrogance are the most basic behaviors (Paulhus & Williams 2002). It is sufficient to have five of these behaviors to be convinced that a person is a narcissist. These can be listed as an exaggeration of one's qualities, tendency to establish authority over others, exhibitionism, tendency to belittle other people, desire for power, desire for attention, being closed to criticism, selfishness, and a high tendency to lie (Jones & Paulhus 2014). Unlike narcissistic individuals, a psychopathic individual is defined not as a personality disorder but as a person's level of a tendency towards psychopathy (Levenson et al. 1995; Mathieu et al. 2014). Their general tendencies and behaviors include immoral behavior, contempt for people, callousness, short-term relationships with people, lack of loyalty to anyone, aggressive behavior, impatience, boredom, impulsiveness, incompatibility, and disharmony. The most prominent types of behavior are emotional deficits, impulsivity, and aggression. Babiak & Hare (2006) defined Psychopathy as "a severe personality disorder with no sense of empathy, no conscience and no sense of guilt about anything".

Counterproductive Work Behaviors

In communities and commercial enterprises that have come together for a purpose, it is one of the most desired situations that the work and processes put forward continue regularly without interruption.

However, what happens in real life is not always in line with expectations. Every day, sociologists, economists, psychologists, and various managers discover new work behaviors that reduce productivity (Marcus & Schuler 2004). Situations that mostly occur with the behavior of damaging the organization, colleagues, managers, customers, business processes, and physical devices of the organization are defined as counterproductive work behavior (Spector & Fox 2005). This can also be described as industrial sabotage. These behaviors that cause material loss include theft, tampering with equipment, falsifying documents, causing damage, stopping production, keeping colleagues busy, interfering with employees, drinking alcohol during work, making noise, and many more (Moretti 1986). Any behavior that one or more people do to harm other people or the organization is counterproductive to work behavior (Neuman & Baron 2005). These people can also demonstrate these behaviors by breaking patterns and resisting authority in circumstances that they believe do not match their lives or expectations (Kalyva 2011). These behaviors can also occur as a result of anger, fear, excitement, inability to control emotions, mental problems, and some health problems. When actions are planned and organized, situations that can be defined as anarchy may occur.

Spector et al. (2006) are among the authors who have studied counterproductive work behavior the most. The researchers defined counterproductive work behaviors with a 5-dimensional framework; briefly defined as misconduct, production deviation, sabotage, theft, and withdrawal. Here, misconduct includes behaviors such as physically and emotionally harming coworkers; production deviation includes behaviors such as not performing the tasks for which they are responsible, decreasing work performance, procrastinating, and not listening to instructions. Sabotage is the intentional misuse of the company or workplace property. It means physically disrupting machinery, environment, and equipment. Theft refers to the attempt to steal items from an organization or business. Withdrawal refers to the behavior of being intentionally late for work and leaving work early or using breaks between work and toilet breaks more than necessary (Yetiş & Çavuş 2019). The definition of withdrawal here is the definition that occurs when translated one-to-one from English. This definition can be interpreted as “deprivation of potential gain”.

When the studies on counterproductive work behaviors are examined, it is seen that the behaviors differ according to the

individual, the organization, the level of violence, and the type of violation (O'Boyle et al. 2011). Taking a break at work without permission is considered to be a behavior directly directed towards the organization while rummaging through a colleague's workbench is a behavior directed towards the individual. Damage to the organization can be to operations or property, while damage to individuals can be demoralizing, diminishing performance, or putting pressure on them. While organizational behaviors can be exemplified by slowing down work, being late, or intentionally doing wrong work, individual behaviors can be exemplified by the concepts of deviance, violence, gossip, secret disclosure, threats, blackmail, theft, and mobbing (Berry et al. 2007). Another type of counterproductive work behavior is mobbing (psychological harassment). This concept, which is expressed by the word "intimidation (mobbing)", is defined as "intimidation, exclusion, discrediting by targeting a specific person in workplaces, schools, etc. in communities, systematically preventing their work and causing them to be restless". We can summarize counterproductive behaviors as intentional and systematic behaviors that directly harm the legitimate interests of the organization under three headings (Seçer & Seçer 2007):

- The need to distinguish between counterproductive work behavior and counterproductivity,
- Cross-cutting characteristics such as illegal, immoral, and deviant behaviors,
- "Intention" in behavior.

Different counterproductive behaviors have been identified and categorized in the literature. These (Gruys 2000; Sackett 2002) are defined as follows: (a) stealing goods or money from employees, giving unauthorized gifts or discounts to third parties; (b) damaging goods and property. Slowing down, degrading, or stopping production by sabotaging; (c) revealing secrets of the workplace or damaging its reputation by using misleading information; (d) sabotaging working hours by misusing time and resources; (e) ignoring or disregarding occupational health and safety rules; (f) absenteeism and shirking work; (g) reducing the quality of work by doing sloppy work; (h) drinking alcohol; (i) using drugs; (j) getting into arguments with customers, colleagues or managers, verbally abusing others; (k) fighting with colleagues or attempting sexual harassment. Bruursema et al. (2011) note that current actions may be motivated by the desire to engage in enjoyable or engaging activities that are detrimental to the

organization or its members. For example, this could include playing non-work-related games during working hours, using the internet for non-work-related activities, gossiping, or telling unpleasant jokes.

When the above-mentioned counterproductive work behaviors are examined, it is understood that these behaviors are a clear threat to the well-being, integrity, and continuity of organizations. Although these behaviors seem to be an action against the organization at the root, it is known to be a triggering factor for other employees within the organization. Therefore, counterproductive work behaviors are a situation that managers and other employees outside of this behavior do not want to encounter in organizational processes. Therefore, the factors that may cause such behaviors need to be carefully examined. Within this scope, it is thought that the factors of Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy, which are defined as the dark triad in the literature, will also affect counterproductive work behaviors. Based on this approach, H_{1a} , H_{1b} , and H_{1c} are created.

H_{1a} : There is a significant relationship between Machiavellianism and counterproductive work behaviors.

H_{1b} : There is a significant relationship between narcissism and counterproductive work behaviours.

H_{1c} : There is a significant relationship between psychopathy and counterproductive work behaviours.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The Population and Sample of the Research

The population of the research consists of private sector employees in Turkey. The sample of the research consists of employees working in a hotel operating in tourism in Antalya province. Purposive sampling methods were used in the research, and the questionnaire was returned from 108 of 152 employees working under the same enterprise, and the questionnaires of 5 respondents were not evaluated due to lack of data integrity.

The Data Collection Method of the Research

The data to be used in the research were obtained by applying the face-to-face survey method. The questionnaire used to obtain data consists of two 5-point Likert scales, namely dark triad and counterproductive work behaviors. For the dark triad, the 12-item scale developed by Jonason & Webster (2010) and adapted into Turkish by Eraslan-Çapan et al. (2015) was used. A 32-item scale developed by Spector et al.

(2006) and adapted into Turkish by Öcel (2010) was applied to determine counterproductive work behaviors.

The Research Model

The dependent variable of the research using the survey model is counterproductive to work behaviors, and the independent variables are Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy, which are expressed as the dark triad.

Data Analysis of the Research

The structural equation model was estimated by the least squares method using the SmartPLS statistical program in the research. Factor loadings for item reliability, Cronbach's Alpha and composite reliability values for internal consistency reliability, mean-variance explained values for convergent validity, and finally, cross-loadings, Fornell-Larcker Criterion, and HTMT Criterion values for discriminant validity were examined. The hypotheses were tested by estimating the structural equation model with the Least Squares Method.

RESULTS

According to the descriptive statistics of the sample, 81.6% of the samples were male, 18.4% were female, and 56.3% were married. When the age distribution of these employees was analyzed, it was determined that employees between the ages of 26-41 constitute 50.5% of the sample. Only 22.3% of the employees are university graduates, while 43.7% are high school graduates by educational background. It was found that 95.1% of the employees in the sample constituted the majority and all employees had more than 1 year of work experience.

Validity and reliability studies were conducted for the scales used in the research. In this sense, item reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and divergent validity were examined. Standardized item loadings were examined for each item to test item reliability (Hair et al., 2010). For Internal Consistency Reliability, Cronbach Alpha coefficient and Composite Reliability (CR) coefficient were taken into consideration (Hair et al. 2017). For convergent validity, attention was paid to Average Variance Extracted (AVE) (Fornell & Larcker 1981). To determine the discriminant validity, cross-loading values and the square roots of AVE values were examined (Hair et al. 2017; Henseler et al. 2015).

Factor loadings of all items in the scales of Machiavellianism, narcissism, psychopathy, and counterproductive work behavior were

calculated, and since all factor loadings were higher than 0.5, item reliability was ensured. Factor loadings below 0.5 (P3) Psychopathy factor loading and (UKT3) Counterproductive Work Behaviors factor loading were excluded from the analysis. Cronbach's Alpha values of the variables were 0.849 for Machiavellianism, 0.919 for narcissism, 0.702 for psychopathy, and 0.990 for counterproductive work behavior. The average variance explained (AVE) values were 0.693 for Machiavellianism, 0.805 for narcissism, 0.623 for psychopathy, and 0.760 for counterproductive work behavior. Composite Reliability (CR) values were 0.899 for Machiavellianism, 0.942 for narcissism, 0.830 for psychopathy, and 0.990 for counterproductive work behavior. Since the Cronbach's Alpha values for the variables were higher than 0.7 and the composite reliability values were higher than 0.5, internal consistency reliability was ensured. Since the average variance explained values are higher than 0.5 (Hair et al. 2017), convergent validity is ensured.

According to the Fornell-Larcker criterion values obtained from the discriminant validity tests, the square root of AVE was 0.832 for Machiavellianism, 0.897 for narcissism, 0.789 for psychopathy, and 0.872 for counterproductive work behavior. The correlation coefficients were 0.647 between Machiavellianism and narcissism; 0.771 between Machiavellianism and psychopathy; 0.534 between Machiavellianism and counterproductive work behaviors; 0.479 between narcissism and psychopathy; 0.248 between narcissism and counterproductive work behaviors; and 0.739 between psychopathy and counterproductive work behaviors. It was determined that these correlation coefficients were lower than the square roots of the AVE values, and thus, the existence of discriminant validity was revealed by fulfilling the Fornell-Larcker criteria.

According to the model analysis results, there is no statistically significant relationship between Machiavellianism and counterproductive work behaviors ($\beta=-0.091$, $t=0.697$, $p>0.05$), and hypothesis H_{1a} is rejected. A statistically significant positive relationship was found between narcissism and counterproductive work behaviors ($\beta=1.318$, $t=2.504$, $p<0.05$), and hypothesis H_{1b} was accepted. A statistically significant positive relationship was found between psychopathy and counterproductive work behaviors ($\beta=0.820$, $t=6.847$, $p<0.05$), and hypothesis H_{1b} was accepted.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study examined the relationship between the dark triad of Machiavellianism, narcissism, psychopathy, and counterproductive work behaviors. Within this scope, data were obtained from employees working in the same organizational climate through a survey method. Internal consistency reliability, composite reliability, convergent validity, and divergent validity tests were applied for these data obtained. The structural equation model was created with the least squares method after the validity and reliability criteria were met. As a result of these analyses, it was determined that there was no statistically significant relationship between Machiavellianism and counterproductive work behaviors. Although no significant relationship was found between Machiavellianism and counterproductive work behaviors as a result of the research, there are studies in the literature that reveal the opposite (Rehman & Shahnawaz 2018; Kantén et al. 2015; Dahling et al. 2012). The other two factors of the dark triad, narcissism and psychopathy, were found to significantly increase counterproductive work behaviors. According to the model, 1 unit increase in narcissism increases counterproductive work behavior by 1.318 units, and 1 unit increase in psychopathy increases counterproductive work behavior by 0.829 units.

Considering their impact levels, narcissism and psychopathy seem to be very important factors that trigger counterproductive work behaviors. Hence, it is understood that organizations should focus on employees with narcissistic and psychopathic personalities. In this context, suggestions for organizational managers in the face of narcissistic employees are as follows: (i) *the fear of losing the person should not be made to feel*; (ii) *no attempt should be made to change his/her personality*; (iii) *behaviors should be clearly displayed*; (iv) *attitudes that feed the ego should be avoided*; (v) *mistakes should be emphasized and expressed*; (vi) *empathy should be forced*; (vi) *reward should not be trivialized*; (vii) *unfair criticism should not be made*; (viii) *clinical therapies should be directed*; (ix) *rotation within the organization should be subjected*. Suggestions for organizational managers in the face of employees with psychopathic personalities are as follows: (i) *differentiate from group work*; (ii) *offer planned work modules*; (iii) *increase work follow-up*; (iv) *include short-term rather than long-term plans*; (v) *avoid a defensive approach*; (vi) *increase commitment*.

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