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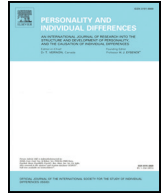
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## The bright and dark sides of leaders' dark triad traits: Effects on subordinates' career success and well-being



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### ABSTRACT

Leaders play a pivotal role in organizations. In the present study, we investigated the role of *leaders'* Dark Triad traits (i.e., narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism) on employees' objective career success (i.e., salary and number of promotions) and subjective career success (i.e., career satisfaction). Further, we investigated how leaders' Dark Triad traits affect employees' well-being (i.e., emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction). In a longitudinal study with two measurement points and a time lag of 3 months, 811 employees from the private and public sector in Germany participated. Results from multiple regressions showed that leaders' Dark Triad traits had, depending on the specific Dark Triad trait, bright and dark sides for employees. Narcissism turned out to be the brightest Dark Triad trait with benefits for subordinates' objective and subjective career success, and with no adverse effects on subordinates' well-being. Extending previous research by investigating the link between *leaders'* Dark Triad traits on subordinates' outcomes, we found evidence for the assumption that Machiavellianism and psychopathy have detrimental effects, also when considering subordinates' career success and well-being. Implications for leadership and career research are derived.

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Recently, there has been an increasing interest in dark personality traits in the workplace as predictors of organizational outcomes (Spain, Harms, & LeBreton, 2014), especially in the *Dark Triad*. The Dark Triad is a common higher-order construct consisting of the three sub-dimensions narcissism, psychopathy and Machiavellianism (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). *Narcissists* are characterized by a sense of grandiosity, a high need for admiration from others and ego-reinforcement. *Psychopaths* are individuals characterized by deficient self-control, impaired affect regulation, and high impulsivity. Finally, people high in *Machiavellianism* can be described as acting in a highly exploitative and emotionally cold way when interacting with others.

The Dark Triad traits are related to important workplace outcomes, such as career success and subordinate well-being (O'Boyle, Forsyth, Banks, & McDaniel, 2012; Hirschi & Jaensch, 2015; Spurr, Keller, & Hirschi, 2015). However, most researchers have studied *subordinates'* Dark Triad traits and their relationship with work outcomes. We adopted a different approach by examining *leaders'* dark traits, assuming that leaders' personality affects subordinates' objective career success (i.e., salary and number of promotions) as well as subjective career success (i.e., career satisfaction). Furthermore, we investigated

the role of leaders' Dark Triad traits on subordinates' work-related well-being (i.e., emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction).

Although the Dark Triad traits are generally considered as being undesirable, research has pointed to these traits' potential bright side in organizational contexts (Judge & LePine, 2007; Wisse, Barelds, & Rietzschel, 2015). Specifically, Judge, Piccolo, and Kosalka (2009) argue that dark *leader* traits can have positive as well as negative consequences for organizations and influence leader emergence and leader effectiveness.

In our study, we investigate whether leaders' Dark Triad traits affect subordinates' objective (i.e., salary and number of promotions) and subjective (i.e., career satisfaction) career success and subordinates' well-being (i.e., emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction). The majority of existing studies on the Dark Triad traits has adopted a cross-sectional research design, limiting conclusions about causality (e.g., Hirschi & Jaensch, 2015; Jonason, Wee, & Li, 2015; Mathieu, Neumann, Hare, & Babiak, 2014; Spurr et al., 2015).

Mathieu et al. (2014) adopted a similar approach as we do in our study. They investigated how supervisors' psychopathic traits are associated with subordinates' well-being (i.e., job satisfaction, psychological distress, work-family conflict). Using the Business-Scan 360 (B-Scan 360, Babiak & Hare, in preparation), they found in two cross-sectional studies with Canadian employees a negative association between leaders' psychopathy (as perceived by their subordinates) and

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subordinates' well-being. Also considering the leader-subordinate relationship, Wisse et al. (2015) investigated in a cross-sectional study the link between employee and supervisor Dark Triad traits and perceived employee innovative behavior at work.

Yet, besides a longitudinal study approach with a relevant real-life sample, a simultaneous consideration of all three leader Dark Triad traits together with the investigation of both career success and well-being outcomes is still missing. Our study investigates the perception of the full range of leaders' Dark Triad traits on both, employees' career success and well-being by means of a longitudinal study with a relevant working sample. Our approach helps gaining a more differential insight into the potential bright and dark sides of leaders' personality for employees' vocational experiences.

## 1. Leaders' personality and followers' career success

*Objective career success* refers to observable attainments one has achieved in his or her career, including salary, salary growth, status, and promotions (Abele, Spurk, & Volmer, 2011; Ng, Eby, Sorensen, & Feldman, 2005). *Subjective career success* is an individual's subjective evaluation of his or her career progress, including career satisfaction (Abele et al., 2011; Heslin, 2005).

We assumed that leaders' narcissism is beneficial for their subordinates' objective and subjective career success. Even though narcissists have difficulty in maintaining interpersonal relationships, they also value others in case those others affirm their own self-image and narcissistic self-views (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). By promoting their subordinates' career development, narcissistic leaders may fulfill their own demand for feeling grandiose and for admiration (Ames, Rose, & Anderson, 2006). Consequently, subordinates of highly narcissistic leaders should attain higher objective career success and accordingly report greater career satisfaction.

**Hypothesis 1.** *Leader narcissism is positively related to (a) subordinates' objective career success (i.e., salary, promotions) and positively related to (b) subordinates' subjective career success (i.e., career satisfaction).*

We expected psychopathy to be negatively related to subordinates' objective and subjective career success. Psychopaths act impulsively and recklessly, pursuing their own goals regardless of interpersonal consequences. They pay little attention to their reputation and are emotionally callous (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). Therefore, we assumed that subordinates who have leaders who are high in psychopathy are objectively less successful in their careers, as psychopathic leaders act primarily in a selfish way. Further, psychopaths score high in arrogance, emotional shallowness, and show low levels of anxiety, guilt, or remorse (O'Boyle et al., 2012). Consequently, subordinates should also report lower subjective career success.

Differentiating between the three Dark Triad traits, researchers have argued that in comparison with narcissism, Machiavellianism and psychopathy form a "Malicious Two", as these traits are uniquely related to stronger malevolence and negative perceptions from others. By contrast, narcissism is perceived as "brighter" (Rauthmann & Kolar, 2013, p. 585). We assumed that subordinates who experience their leaders as being high in Machiavellianism are objectively and subjectively less successful in their careers. Machiavellians ruthlessly pursue their personal goals, possess a strong belief in the effectiveness of manipulative tactics, have a cynical world view, and put expediency above principle (O'Boyle et al., 2012). In sum, we postulate the following hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 2.** *Leader psychopathy is negatively related to (a) subordinates' objective career success (i.e., salary, promotions) and negatively related to (b) subordinates' subjective career success (i.e., career satisfaction).*

**Hypothesis 3.** *Leader Machiavellianism is negatively related to (a) subordinates' objective career success (i.e., salary, promotions) and negatively*

*related to (b) subordinates' subjective career success (i.e., career satisfaction).*

## 2. Leaders' personality and followers' well-being

We assumed that all Dark Triad traits are negatively related to subordinates' well-being (i.e., emotional exhaustion, job satisfaction). *Emotional exhaustion* refers to the stress dimension of burnout and includes feelings of being exhausted by the emotional demands of an individual's work (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). *Job satisfaction* refers to an individual's evaluation of his or her job or facets of that job (Spector, 1985). The common core of all three Dark Triad traits is social aversion, emotional coldness, aggressiveness and a tendency to manipulate others (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). Hogan and Hogan (2001) assume that subordinates suffer from bad leadership as they have limited possibilities to defend themselves.

In detail, narcissistic leaders lack empathy and therefore are likely to make selfish decisions without taking in mind their subordinates' needs and interests (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006). Therefore subordinates with narcissistic leaders should show lower levels of well-being as they are left alone with their problems or concerns they face at work. Shurden (2015) found that leaders high in narcissism have worse relationships with their subordinates, which in consequence negatively impacts subordinates' job satisfaction.

Psychopaths strive for self-enrichment and have no concerns. According to Boddy (2006), psychopathic leaders do not shy away from exploiting their subordinates and using them to pursue their own goals. Additionally, they are neither emotionally attached to their subordinates nor concerned with the effects their behaviors have on other people (Boddy, 2006). It was found that leaders' psychopathy predicts subordinates' psychological distress (Mathieu, Babiak, Jones, Neumann, & Hare, 2012). Machiavellians also act selfishly, manipulate and exploit others to achieve their long-term goals (Jones & Paulhus, 2011). Therefore they show high levels of impulse control and are emotionally callous (Jones & Paulhus, 2011). Machiavellians are characterized by low levels of conscience and remorse (Rauthmann & Will, 2011). Therefore we assume that leaders' psychopathy and Machiavellianism is negatively related to subordinates well-being, as leaders with high values in these traits are likely to recklessly pursue their selfish goals and do not consider their subordinates' needs.

**Hypothesis 4.** *Leader narcissism is positively related to (a) subordinates' emotional exhaustion and (b) negatively related to subordinates' job satisfaction.*

**Hypothesis 5.** *Leader psychopathy is positively related to (a) subordinates' emotional exhaustion and (b) negatively related to subordinates' job satisfaction.*

**Hypothesis 6.** *Leader Machiavellianism is positively related to (a) subordinates' emotional exhaustion and (b) negatively related to subordinates' job satisfaction.*

## 3. Method

### 3.1. Participants

Data were collected via a German online panel (Görizt, 2014) during May and August 2015. As outlined by others (e.g. Spurk et al., 2015), the data quality of online panels can be considered as high (Kubicek, Paskvan, & Korunka, 2014; Ng & Feldman, 2010). We tested our hypotheses using a longitudinal research design with two measurement points with a time lag of 3 months. We chose a time frame of 3 months to hold seasonal effects on business activities constant and to keep the attrition rate as low as possible. Our sample consisted of 811 subordinates (56.6% women, 43.5% men) with an average age of 46.7 years (SD = 10.4). All

participants had a direct supervisor and 26.6% of the participants held a leading position. Participants worked on average 35.2 h per week ( $SD = 8.9$ ) and had on average 12.3 years of tenure ( $SD = 10.5$ ). Regarding their education level, 52.8% had an O/A-level education, 33.5% had a university degree, 3.5% a doctorate, and the remaining 10.2% of participants had a low education level (9 years of school or less). Respondents worked in diverse industries with the majority of participants working in the healthcare and social services industry (18.7%), followed by the public administration industry (12.3%), and the manufacturing industry (10.1%).

### 3.2. Procedure

Potential respondents received an e-mail invitation that included the link to the web-based study and information about the study's content and procedure. At Time 1 (T1), we measured the Dark Triad traits of their direct supervisor as perceived by the follower and the control variables (i.e., age, gender, and working hours). At Time 2 (T2), we assessed objective (i.e., salary and number of promotions) and subjective career success (i.e., career satisfaction) as well as subordinates' well-being (i.e., emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction).

### 3.3. Measures

#### 3.3.1. Dark Triad

We applied the well-accepted 12-item Dirty Dozen scale to assess narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism (four items on 9-point Likert scales for each of the Dark Triad factors, Jonason & Webster, 2010) of followers' direct supervisor as perceived by them. Exemplary items were "My supervisor tends to want others to admire him/her." (narcissism), "My supervisor tends to lack remorse." (psychopathy), and "My supervisor tends to manipulate others to get his/her way." (Machiavellianism). Cronbach's  $\alpha$  was 0.93 with narcissism, 0.87 with psychopathy and 0.93 with Machiavellianism.

#### 3.3.2. Objective career success

We used salary and number of promotions as indicators of followers' objective career success as these are the most widely used indicators of objective career success (Ng et al., 2005). To assess monthly salary before taxes (i.e., salary, Judge, Higgins, Thoresen, & Barrick, 1999), participants were offered 11 categories that indicated the salary in Euro they earned per month ranging from 1 (up to 999) to 11 (10,000 or more). Regarding number of promotions, respondents were asked to name the number of promotions they had received so far (open question).

#### 3.3.3. Subjective career success

To assess subjective career success, we applied the 5-item career satisfaction scale (5-point Likert scale, sample item "I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my overall career goals.", Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormley, 1990; Spurk, Abele, & Volmer, 2011). Cronbach's  $\alpha$  was 0.92.

#### 3.3.4. Psychological well-being

For the assessment of well-being, measures of emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction were applied. To assess emotional exhaustion the 8-item subscale of the German Oldenburg Burnout Inventory was used (4-point Likert scale, sample item "After my work, I regularly feel worn out and weary." Demerouti, Bakker, Vardakou, & Kantas, 2003). Cronbach's  $\alpha$  was 0.86. We measured job satisfaction with the 4-item Brief Index of Affective Job Satisfaction (Thompson & Phua, 2012). Participants indicated on 5-point Likert scales (1 = totally disagree to 5 = totally agree) how much they agreed with each item. A sample item was "I find real enjoyment in my job.". Cronbach's  $\alpha$  was 0.93.

### 3.3.5. Control variables

We included some control variables that have been shown to be relevant for the prediction of career success (Ng et al., 2005) and well-being (Sonnetag, 2015), and thus are relevant for our sample. We controlled for age, gender (0 = female, 1 = male), and hours worked per week (open question).

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Preliminary analyses

First, we used Mplus Version 7.3 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2012) to calculate confirmatory factor analyses to show that the three Dark Triad sub-dimensions are empirically distinguishable from each other. The analyses revealed a better model fit for the three-factor solution ( $\chi^2 = 64.714$ , degrees of freedom [df] = 32, comparative fit index [CFI] = 0.996, root mean square error of approximation [RMSEA] = 0.04, standardized root mean square residual [SRMR] = 0.02) than for a one-factor solution ( $\chi^2 = 1637.63$ , df = 54, CFI = 0.82, RMSEA = 0.20, SRMR = 0.06). Additionally, we calculated the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and the composite reliability (CR) for every latent construct (e.g. narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism). The AVE values were all  $>0.62$  indicating a good convergent validity of the latent constructs. The CR values were all  $>0.99$  indicating a good reliability and internal consistency of the latent constructs. Second, means, standard deviations, and correlations of the study variables are shown in Table 1.

### 4.2. Hypotheses testing

We conducted multiple linear regressions for each of the outcome variables controlling for age, gender, and working hours. In all models the VIF values were well below 0.99 and the tolerance statistics above 1.01, which indicates that there is no collinearity. Regarding objective career success, we found a positive effect of follower-perceived leader narcissism on subordinates' salary ( $\beta = 0.14$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and promotions ( $\beta = 0.14$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Leader Machiavellianism had a marginally negative effect on subordinates' salary ( $\beta = -0.10$ ,  $p < 0.07$ ), but was unrelated to the number of promotions ( $\beta = -0.08$ ,  $p = 0.16$ ). Leader psychopathy was neither related to subordinates' salary ( $\beta = -0.05$ ,  $p = 0.35$ ), nor to the number of promotions ( $\beta = -0.05$ ,  $p = 0.39$ ). For follower subjective career success, we found a marginally positive effect of leader narcissism on career satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.11$ ,  $p < 0.06$ ) and a negative effect for leader Machiavellianism on career satisfaction ( $\beta = -0.18$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Leader psychopathy was unrelated to follower career satisfaction ( $\beta = -0.09$ ,  $p = 0.13$ ). Findings regarding the associations of perceived leaders' traits and employees' career outcomes (i.e., objective and subjective career success) are depicted in Table 2. In sum, Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 3 were (partly) supported, whereas Hypothesis 2 was not.

Regarding follower well-being indicators (i.e., emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction), leader psychopathy and Machiavellianism were both positively related to follower emotional exhaustion ( $\beta = 0.11$ ,  $p < 0.05$  and  $\beta = 0.16$ ,  $p < 0.01$ , respectively), and leader narcissism was unrelated to follower emotional exhaustion ( $\beta = 0.01$ ,  $p = 0.82$ ). With regard to follower job satisfaction, findings showed a negative effect of leader psychopathy ( $\beta = -0.15$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and no effects of narcissism and Machiavellianism ( $\beta = 0.09$ ,  $p = 0.13$ , and  $\beta = -0.09$ ,  $p = 0.12$ , respectively). Findings regarding the associations of perceived leaders' traits and employees' well-being (i.e., emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction) are depicted in Table 3. In sum, Hypothesis 5 and Hypothesis 6 were (partly) supported, whereas Hypothesis 4 was not.

## 5. Discussion

Our longitudinal field study in which we investigated the differential effects of follower perceptions of leaders' Dark Triad traits on followers'

**Table 1**  
Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations among study variables.

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Follower age	46.74	10.38	–									
2. Follower gender	0.44	0.50	0.08*	–								
3. Follower working hours	35.22	8.89	–0.08*	0.27***	–							
4. Leader narcissism	4.92	2.19	–0.01	–0.03	0.06	–						
5. Leader psychopathy	4.40	2.03	–0.08*	0.07	0.09*	0.74***	–					
6. Leader Machiavellianism	4.59	2.32	–0.06	0.01	0.10**	0.75***	0.76***	–				
7. Follower salary	3.72	1.93	0.05	0.24***	0.40***	0.05	0.02	0.01	–			
8. Follower promotions	1.84	2.01	0.25***	0.15***	0.16***	0.02	–0.04	–0.04	0.34***	–		
9. Follower career satisfaction	3.63	0.89	0.10**	0.06	0.12**	–0.09*	–0.13***	–0.16***	0.31***	0.32***	–	
10. Follower emotional exhaustion	2.23	0.58	–0.14***	–0.07	0.03	0.21***	0.25***	0.26***	–0.08*	–0.09*	–0.29***	–
11. Follower job satisfaction	3.68	0.86	0.11**	–0.02	0.05	–0.09*	–0.16***	–0.14***	0.12**	0.20***	0.58***	–0.47***

Note. Gender: 0 = female, 1 = male;

\*  $p < 0.05$   
 \*\*  $p < 0.01$   
 \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

objective and subjective career success as well as their well-being, showed that leaders' dark personality had, depending on the specific Dark Triad trait, bright and dark sides. Narcissism turned out to be the brightest Dark Triad trait with benefits for subordinates' objective and subjective career success, and with no adverse effects on subordinates' well-being. Extending previous research by investigating the link between leaders' Dark Triad traits on subordinates' outcomes, we found evidence for the assumption that the "Malicious Two" (Rauthmann & Kolar, 2013, p. 585) (i.e., Machiavellianism and psychopathy) have detrimental effects, also when considering subordinates' career success and well-being.

Subordinates who rated their leaders high in narcissism reported higher own objective career success in terms of salary and number of promotions. Thus it seems that leaders' narcissism is beneficial for their subordinates' careers. This is interesting, as the Dark Triad traits consist of socially malevolent personalities that are characterized by high levels of (longer-term) disagreeableness and thus are considered to be maladaptive (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). However, as Morf and Rhodewalt (2001) point out, narcissists continually seek for positive feedback and prefer relationships with persons who affirm their own self-esteem, such as persons with positive qualities (Campbell, 1999). It might be that by promoting their subordinates' career narcissistic leaders try to retain subordinates to get continuing admiration from

loyal subordinates and/or try to make subordinates feel grateful in order to enhance their own self-esteem.

Unexpectedly, leader narcissism did not predict subordinates' well-being. We expected a positive effect of leaders' narcissism on subordinates' emotional exhaustion and a negative effect on subordinates' job satisfaction, as narcissistic persons lack empathy and do not consider their subordinates' needs and interests (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006). Unlike Shurden (2015), who found a negative indirect effect of leaders' narcissism on subordinates' job satisfaction through leader-member exchange, in our study leaders' narcissism was unrelated to follower job satisfaction. As expected, leaders' Machiavellianism and psychopathy were unfavorable for subordinates' career success and well-being. Leader Machiavellianism was marginally negatively related to subordinates' objective career success (salary), and leader psychopathy was negatively related to subordinates' career satisfaction. Psychopaths as well as Machiavellians recklessly pursue their own goals and do not shy away from manipulating others (O'Boyle et al., 2012). Psychopaths are likely to claim the credit for their subordinates' work or blame them for their own faults (Boddy, 2006). Additionally, leader Machiavellianism was positively related to subordinates' emotional exhaustion, and leader psychopathy was negatively related to subordinates' job satisfaction. This may be due to the fact that persons high in Machiavellianism and in psychopathy do not care for others and do not show empathy (Boddy, 2006; Jones & Paulhus, 2011). In sum, our findings support Rauthmann and Kolar (2013) that, in comparison to narcissism, Machiavellianism and psychopathy form the "Malicious Two" and have more detrimental effects.

**Table 2**  
Multiple linear regressions of career success on the Dark Triad.

	Follower salary		Follower promotions		Follower career satisfaction	
	$\beta$	$p$	$\beta$	$p$	$\beta$	$p$
Step 1						
Follower age	0.05	0.136	0.26	0.000***	0.11	0.003**
Follower gender	0.13	0.000***	0.09	0.024	0.02	0.671
Follower working hours	0.01	0.000***	0.15	0.000***	0.12	0.001**
R <sup>2</sup>	0.18		0.10		0.03	
Step 2						
Follower age	0.04	0.219	0.25	0.000***	0.09	0.012*
Follower gender	0.14	0.000***	0.09	0.015*	0.02	0.549
Follower working hours	0.37	0.000***	0.16	0.000***	0.14	0.000***
Leader narcissism	0.13	0.015*	0.14	0.015*	0.11	0.065
Leader psychopathy	–0.05	0.370	–0.06	0.351	–0.08	0.157
Leader Machiavellianism	–0.09	0.092	–0.09	0.138	–0.18	0.002**
R <sup>2</sup>	0.19		0.11		0.06	

\*  $p < 0.05$   
 \*\*  $p < 0.01$   
 \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

**Table 3**  
Multiple linear regressions of follower well-being on the Dark Triad.

	Follower emotional exhaustion		Follower job satisfaction	
	$\beta$	$p$	$\beta$	$p$
Step 1				
Follower age	–0.12	0.001*	0.10	0.003**
Follower gender	0.04	0.086	–0.04	0.252
Follower working hours	0.00	0.235	0.06	0.120
R <sup>2</sup>	0.02	0.01		
Step 2				
Follower age	–0.10	0.006*	0.09	0.015*
Follower gender	–.07	0.067	–0.03	0.370
Follower working hours	0.02	0.64	0.07	0.048*
Leader narcissism	0.01	0.831	0.08	0.153
Leader psychopathy	0.11	0.071	–0.14	0.017*
Leader Machiavellianism	0.17	0.004**	–0.09	0.109
R <sup>2</sup>	0.09	0.04		

\*  $p < 0.05$   
 \*\*  $p < 0.01$

## 6. Strengths and limitations

Our study with a consideration of leaders' Dark Triad traits and both follower career success and well-being allowed insights into the association of leader Dark Triad traits with employees' vocational experiences. The present study is one of the rare studies that have investigated the effects of leaders' Dark Triad traits, which is important as leaders play a pivotal role in organizations. A strength of the study is its longitudinal design in which we first measured leaders' Dark Triad as perceived by the subordinate and 3 months later we measured outcome variables on the level of the subordinate. Although this chronological order is at best a hint but not a proof that leader Dark Triad traits causally influence subordinates' career success and well-being it precludes reverse causation only and it reduces methodological artifacts. Moreover, the fact that we found opposite effects of some of the three Dark Triad traits is an indication that subordinates who are relatively unsuccessful in their career and/or whose well-being is relatively low have not simply ascribed negative characteristics to their leaders in an undifferentiated manner; thus suggesting that the results do not merely reflect a halo effect. Rather, subordinates who had perceived their leader as narcissistic enjoyed comparatively high career success 3 months later, whereas subordinates who had perceived their leader as Machiavellian reported comparatively low career success 3 months later. A further strength of the study is the large and heterogeneous real-life sample of employees. Because the respondents had diverse occupational backgrounds the generalizability of the results to different occupational domains is likely.

Our study dealt with employees' perceptions of their leaders' Dark Triad traits. Thus, we did not measure leaders' own perceptions. Moreover, we did not ask employees to rate their own Dark Triad traits, which would have allowed examining specific leader-member Dark Triad configurations. In addition, as our study was conducted with a German sample, the findings should be generalized to different cultures with caution. Findings should be replicated with samples from different countries.

## 7. Conclusion

Our findings suggest that organizations should pay attention to leaders' Machiavellianism and psychopathy due to their detrimental effects. This is relevant when filling leader positions, and it is relevant when dealing with existing leaders in the organization. Existing leaders should be made aware of the effect their personality may have on their employees and might be instructed in effective leadership styles (e.g., transformational leadership) as a compensation for the potential negative effects of the Dark Triad traits.

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