

Empirical examinations on bright and dark sides of personality traits in the context of destructive management and leadership

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Abstract of the dissertation

Within the last 25 years, researchers identified different destructive behaviors of leaders, various outcomes and some major reasons for their emergence. However, the attention given to personality traits in this context does not yet reflect their relevance as excellent predictors of (bad) behavior. Further, the field of Human Resource Management (HRM) could derive valuable measures against destructive leadership, if more was known about the role of managers' and followers' 'bright' and 'dark' personality traits in such situations. Consequently, this dissertation combines research on leadership and three HRM functions (i.e., acquisition, placement, motivation) and, in three separate empirical studies, examines the role of personality traits in explaining destructive management and leadership.

The first contribution is an experimental vignette study on hiring recommendations of Dark Triad supervisors for Dark Triad applicants. Based on the Similarity-Attraction Paradigm, results show that supervisors who are high in Dark Triad traits (i.e., Narcissism, Psychopathy, and Machiavellianism) tend to recommend applicants that also show high levels in those traits. This bias leads to decisions in personnel selection processes that prefer individuals with 'dark' traits, which are then likely to result in detrimental actions, e.g. counterproductive work behavior.

The second study introduces the Sensory Processing Sensitivity trait (SPS) into the context of expatriate management. Although SPS is known to relate to positive outcomes, individuals high in SPS tend to be easily overwhelmed and stressed by new environmental stimuli. This study draws on the Conservation of Resources Theory and uses a cross-sectional design to find that the 'dark' side of SPS prevails in the expatriate context and that it indirectly and positively relates to expatriates' turnover intentions via social capital and stress.

In the third study, I examine resistance behaviors of followers when their supervisor exploits them. Based on complementary Person-Supervisor Fit, I expect that there are followers with certain interaction styles (giver, taker, or matcher) that tend to resist in a more constructive way than others do. Using an experimental vignette approach, results show that givers express higher levels of overall resistance caused by an increase in constructive resistance. Takers and matchers show less constructive, but more dysfunctional resistance.

The results of this dissertation shed light on the relevance of 'bright' and 'dark' personality traits in the context of destructive leadership and management. They suggest various possibilities for HRM to protect the organization and its employees from negative consequences.

Paper 1 - Birds of a bad feather flock together – An experimental examination of Dark Triad supervisors' hiring recommendations for Dark Triad applicants

Authors: Paul Goldmann, Sarah Och, Björn Schäfer

Organizations strive to hire employees that add the highest benefit to the organization. Therefore, acquiring the right employees is one of the most relevant organizational objectives (Dessain, 2016; Uggerslev et al., 2012). While organizations aim to base decisions on objective criteria in their personnel selection processes (e.g., Higgins and Judge, 2004), similarity-attraction can bias the hiring recommendations of those involved, such as supervisors (Byrne, 1971; García, Posthuma, & Colella, 2008; Tsai, Chi, Huang, & Hsu, 2011). Thus, subjective perceptions outweigh objective selection criteria to a certain degree (Catterfeld, 2010; Kristof-Brown, 2000; Rynes & Gerhart, 1990).

This has detrimental consequences for the organization, when supervisors feel attracted to applicants with undesirable personality traits that relate, for instance, to counterproductive work behaviors (Chamorro-Premuzic, 2015; O'Boyle, Ernest, Forsyth, Banks, & McDaniel, 2012). Surprisingly, current studies have examined similarity-attraction dominantly in the light of 'bright' personality traits (e.g., Big Five), but they have neglected situations in personnel selection processes in which 'dark' personality traits meet. Hence, this study fills this gap by examining hiring recommendations of Dark Triad supervisors for Dark applicants in vocational contexts that are associated in different ways with the Dark Triad (i.e., sales vs. nursing).

Results of an experimental vignette study with 199 participants show that Dark Triad supervisors stick to subjective instead of objective criteria when making hiring recommendations. In doing so, supervisors neglect how well applicants fit the vacant position and, thus, put at risk effective personnel selection.

This study contributes to the literature by showing the dominance of the Similarity-Attraction Paradigm over the complementary Person-Supervisor Fit in personnel selection processes in the context of undesirable personality traits. Prior studies applied similarity-attraction at the team level (Devendorf & Highhouse, 2008) and to organizational attraction (Van Hoye & Turban, 2015). Recruiters are more likely to recommend applicants with similar bright traits (Strauss et al., 2001), values or attitudes (Cable & Judge, 1997; García et al., 2008). The present study found further evidence of a subjective rater bias in personnel selection processes, as the supervisors' fit evaluations of applicants are influenced by their own dark personal characteristics (e.g., Sears and Rowe, 2003).

In the context of dark traits, prior studies focused solely on the applicant's perspective in the personnel selection process (e.g., Jonason, Kaufman, Webster, & Geher, 2013; Roulin & Bourdage, 2017). This study adds to current knowledge by integrating the supervisor's perspective and examining dark personality traits that are manifested in both parts of the dyad, i.e. the recruiting supervisor and applicant.

This study also highlights the importance of deep-level diversity management in personnel selection processes as it identifies similarity-attraction as a dominant cause for hiring Dark Triad applicants, even though their personalities are detrimental to the organization. To prevent rater bias, recruiting managers have to be aware of both similarity in personality traits, and of bright and dark personality traits that cause (un-) desirable organizational outcomes.

Paper 2 - Do overwhelmed expatriates intend to leave? The effects of Sensory Processing Sensitivity, stress, and social capital on expatriates' turnover intention

Authors: Maike Andresen, Paul Goldmann, Anna Volodina

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Expatriates need to deal with numerous stimuli resulting from new environmental and cultural influences abroad, contributing to stress and high rates of failure and turnover (e.g., Caligiuri, 2000; Haslberger et al., 2013). Based on Hobfoll's (1989) Conservation-of-Resources Theory, this study aims to explore the role of resources (i.e., sensory processing sensitivity and social capital) in explaining expatriates' perceived stress and turnover intention. Sensory processing sensitivity (SPS) implies greater awareness of sensory stimulation, behavioral inhibition, and a deeper cognitive processing of environmental stimuli, leading to higher emotional and physiological reactivity (Aron, Aron, & Jagiellowicz, 2012; Aron & Aron, 1997). Highly sensitive persons can be easily overwhelmed and stressed by new and/or intense environmental or social stimuli (Aron et al., 2012), for example, resulting from interactions with foreigners in an unfamiliar culture. Hence, this study examines whether this trait's 'bright' or 'dark' side is dominant in expatriate assignments.

Based on a dataset of 311 expatriates, structural equation modeling and mediation analyses showed full mediation of the positive relation between SPS and turnover intention through perceived stress. In addition, stress fully mediated the negative relation between bonding social capital and turnover intention. While 20% of the domestic population are assumed to show high SPS (Acevedo et al., 2014), this study's expatriate sample shows a 26.4% ratio. There were

significant differences in SPS levels between organizational and external expatriates in the sample. The group of organizational expatriates included 30.7% highly sensitive expatriates, while only 19.3% of external expatriates were highly sensitive.

This is the first study examining the SPS trait in a management context. Results reveal a ‘dark’ side of SPS in international assignments, as it relates to higher levels of stress. This finding is in line with results by Gerstenberg (2012) in a domestic context, which pinpointed similar relationships and stress levels. This suggests that – after expatriates spent a certain amount of time abroad – exposure to the foreign environment might no longer moderate the relation between SPS and perceived stress.

Second, the higher ratio of high SPS expatriates points towards a ‘bright’ side of the trait in expatriate assignments. Due to their higher self-reflectivity (Aron, 1996), highly sensitive individuals tend to be aware that they are prone to stress in new environments, for example, when relocating to a foreign country. It, therefore, seems reasonable to assume that there are less than 20% highly sensitive expatriates, because they could avoid confronting additional stressors in a foreign environment to protect their resources. In contrast, the sample shows a ratio of 30.7% of highly sensitive organizational expatriates and 19.3% of highly sensitive external expatriates. While it, thus, seems that organizations value highly sensitive employees for international assignments and foster their placement, future research will have to replicate this finding in representative samples and examine the reasons for this notion.

Lastly, regarding the SPS trait in the expatriation context, management needs to support highly sensitive expatriates by reducing feelings of being overwhelmed and enabling them to make use of the trait’s ‘bright’ side. This can be done both in advance and during the assignment. The most effective interventions may be mentoring or (individual) coaching at the company’s headquarters and, if possible, also during the assignments.

Paper 3 - How do followers with different interaction styles resist exploitative leaders? An experimental vignette study

Author: Paul Goldmann

Destructive leadership triggers follower resistance and thereby diminishes organizations’ wealth (Bligh, Kohles, Pearce, Justin, & Stovall, 2007; Tepper et al., 2001). Exploitative leaders, representing a subtype of destructive leaders, impair their subordinates and organizations by exceedingly self-interested behaviors (Schmid et al., 2017). In the sense of the giver-

matcher-taker interaction styles (Grant, 2013), those leaders would identify as takers (i.e., they take considerably more than they give) and cause their followers to suffer negative consequences. However, followers' reaction in terms of resistance may depend on the Person-Supervisor Fit (Kim and Kim, 2013; Muchinsky and Monahan, 1987) of their own and their supervisor's interaction styles. This study aims to take the follower's giver, matcher, or taker style into account and examines their resistance to exploitation. The results of an online experimental vignette study with 345 participants show that exploitative leadership increases follower resistance. While there is no significant difference between the followers' interaction styles in showing dysfunctional resistance, givers exhibit higher levels of constructive resistance than matchers and takers when being exploited.

Results show that exploitative leadership increases follower resistance in general. These findings transfer and replicate those of Bligh and colleagues (2007), Tepper and colleagues (2001) and Bamberger and Bacharach (2006) to the context of exploitative leadership. Resistance behaviors are a tactic for retaliation. They are expressed by a refusal to work or by any of the following: delayed execution of tasks, discussions, irresolute task execution, or a loss of time and energy solving conflicts instead of pursuing the organization's goals (Bamberger & Bacharach, 2006; Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007; Tepper et al., 2006). Hence, resistance behaviors are costly to organizations.

The results support and enrich the general finding of recent research that reactions to destructive leadership like coping and resistance depend on individual characteristics (May, Wesche, Heinitz, & Kerschreiter, 2014; Oh & Farh, 2017; Tepper, 2007). Givers adapt the taker and matcher approach when it comes to resisting in an unhelpful way, but they also try to develop solutions that are both helpful for themselves and the destructive leader and, therefore, for the organization itself. On the other hand, this study finds that takers do not increase their resistance facing exploitative leaders. This goes back to them being obedient and respectful towards their superiors in situation where they lack the power to effect changes (Forte, 2014). Hence, their strategy is to make a good impression and deceiving their counterpart so that they get into power and show their true face after being successful (Grant, 2013). My results add to this knowledge by showing that takers show a constant overall level of resistance by decreasing constructive and increasing dysfunctional resistance.

This study extends knowledge on complementary Person-Supervisor Fit in the area of destructive leadership. The demands-abilities fit (Muchinsky and Monahan, 1987) found here is new in destructive leadership research and adds to the study of Marstand and colleagues

(2017) who examined a supplies-value Person-Supervisor Fit. This study also adds to the literature on destructive leadership, especially exploitative leadership, by integrating followers' giver-matcher-taker interaction styles into the model to predict follower resistance in scenarios of exploitative leadership. Thereby, it shows that reactions to exploitation are dependent on individual characteristics. This answers calls by various researchers in the field of destructive leadership to no longer neglect follower characteristics (e.g., Dupré et al., 2006; Krasikova et al., 2013; Thoroughgood et al., 2018).

This study's results point to implications for recruiting and team composition. A good fit between supervisors and employees is crucial for success as it directly affects attitudes and behaviors of followers (Kristof-Brown, Barrick, & Stevens, 2005). Hence, companies should aim to hire managers and subordinates that match well. This should not only comprise characteristics of surface diversity like age or gender, but also deep-level characteristics (e.g., Bell, 2007) such as giver-matcher-taker interaction styles.

Birds of a bad feather flock together – An experimental examination of Dark Triad supervisors' hiring recommendations for Dark Triad applicants

Paul Goldmann, Sarah Och, Björn Schäfer

Abstract

Organizations strive to hire employees that bring the greatest benefit to the organization. While organizations aim to base decisions on objective criteria in their personnel selection processes, similarity-attraction can bias the hiring recommendations of the involved persons, such as supervisors. This bias has especially detrimental consequences for the organization when supervisors feel inclined to applicants with undesirable personality traits. We examine hiring recommendations of Dark Triad supervisors (i.e., high in Narcissism, Psychopathy, and Machiavellianism) for Dark Triad applicants in vocational contexts (sales vs. nursing) that are associated differently with the Dark Triad. The results of our experimental vignette study with 199 participants show that the Similarity-Attraction Paradigm dominates the complementary Person-Job Fit. Hence, Dark Triad supervisors stick to subjective instead of objective criteria when making hiring recommendations. We discuss the theoretical and managerial implications of our results.

Keywords: Dark Triad, personnel selection, similarity-attraction, Person-Job Fit

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Maïke Andresen, Paul Goldmann, Anna Volodina

Abstract

Expatriates need to deal with numerous stimuli resulting from new environmental and cultural influences abroad, contributing to stress and high rates of failure and turnover. Based on conservation-of-resources theory, this study aims to explore the role of resources (including sensory processing sensitivity (SPS) and social capital) in explaining expatriates' perceived stress and turnover intention. This is the first study to examine the personality trait SPS in the field of expatriate management. High-SPS individuals tend to be easily overwhelmed by novel stimuli. Based on a dataset of 311 expatriates, structural equation model (SEM) and mediation analyses proved full mediation of the positive relation between SPS and turnover intention through perceived stress. Moreover, stress fully mediated the negative relation between bonding social capital and turnover intention. While 20% of the domestic population are assumed to show high SPS, we found a 26.4% ratio in our expatriate sample. Implications for both management and research are derived.

Keywords: sensory processing sensitivity; turnover intention; stress; social capital; conservation-of-resources theory

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How do followers with different interaction styles resist exploitative leaders? An experimental vignette study

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Abstract

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Keywords: Follower resistance, exploitative leadership, interaction style, giver, taker, matcher

Goldmann, P. (under review). How do followers with different interaction styles resist to exploitative leaders? An experimental vignette study.