

## Extended Abstract

# The Effect of the Dark Triad on Organizational Dissent: A Structural Equation Model\*

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## Abstract

The aim of the research is to investigate the effects of dark personality traits on organizational dissent. In the framework of this aim, 322 white-collar private-sector employees have been applied scales and a personal information form. The Dark Triad Scale (DT-S) is used in the study for measuring the dark triad. The scale contains the dimensions of Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy. The Organizational Dissent Scale (OD-S by Kassing; Turkish adaptation by Ötken and Ceneci) has been utilized in measuring organizational dissent. The sub-dimensions of the scale have been determined as constructive articulated dissent, questioning articulated dissent, latent dissent, and displaced dissent. Validity and reliability analyses have been performed for the scale. Exploratory factor analysis, confirmatory factor analysis, Cronbach's alpha values, values for the average variance explained (AVE), and values for the compound reliability (CR) have been utilized in this context. The findings obtained from the study data and model that emerged in the research have been tested. The goodness-of-fit indexes for the model, tested in accordance with the structural equation modeling analysis, have been detected to be acceptable. The research results reveal narcissism to negatively impact displaced organizational dissent. In addition, psychopathy has been shown to positively and significantly affect the following sub-dimensions of organizational dissent: constructive articulated dissent, latent dissent, and displaced dissent.

## Keywords

Dark triad • Narcissism • Machiavellianism • Psychopathy • Organizational dissent • Structural Equation Model

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In the literature on management and organization, interest in the negative aspects of organizational life has increased (Robinson & Bennet, 1995; Peterson, 2002; Appelbaum & Shapiro, 2006). The dark side of the personality has also taken its share of this increased interest (Spain et al., 2013). The concept of the dark triad was first used by Paulhus and Williams (2002) and has three clustered characteristics of the personality that are socially undesired (the dark triad): Machiavellianism, subclinical narcissism, and subclinical psychopathy (Jonason & Webster, 2010). Machiavellianism is defined as interpersonal strategies that defend self-interests, deception and manipulation (Jakobwitz & Evani, 2006). Subclinical narcissism indicates tending to have authority, status, and reputation; being appreciated; and garnering attention (Jonason et al., 2009). Additionally, for subclinical psychopathy, excitement seeking, irresponsibility, lack of empathy, interpersonal manipulation and antisocial behaviors can also be exhibited (Rauthmann & Kolar, 2012).

Kassing (1998) defined organizational dissent as a multi-stage process that expresses the conflicts and contradictory thoughts resulting from the experience of feeling apart from one's organization. Kassing (1997, 1998) suggested three types of dissent in organization. Articulated dissent involves stating dissent directly and openly to superiors. Latent dissent includes conveying the ideas to ineffective audiences (i.e., colleagues) rather than those at the top with organizational strength. Displaced dissent expresses criticism about the organization to external listeners (i.e., friends, family, significant others). Moreover, articulated dissent can be analyzed in two sub-dimensions: constructive articulated dissent and questioning articulated dissent. In questioning articulated dissent, employees convey their disagreements and opposing thoughts to their managers without hesitation. In constructive articulated dissent, however, this is actualized more moderately (Kaya, 2016).

In the last 30 years, the scientific accumulation of organizational dissent has demonstrated many factors to contribute to the decision about when and to whom employees will dissent (Graham, 1986; Hegstrom, 1990; Kassing, 1997, 1998, 2000a, 2000b, 2002; Kassing & DiCioccio, 2004; Kassing & McDowell, 2008; Ötken & Cenççi, 2015; Buckner et al., 2018). Undoubtedly, one of these factors is considered to be personality traits (De Dreu, 2000, Kassing & Avtgis, 1999, 2001; Ötken & Cenççi, 2013, 2015). This research investigates the interactions between the dark side of the personality and organizational dissent. The dark side of the personality has been examined with regard to the dark triad. Moreover, organizational dissent has been examined in terms of constructive articulated dissent, questioning articulated dissent, latent dissent, and displaced dissent. Hence, the hypotheses based on the listed previous empirical studies are as follows:

- H<sub>1</sub>: Machiavellianism positively affects perceived organizational dissent (constructive articulated dissent, questioning articulated dissent, latent dissent, displaced dissent).
- H<sub>2</sub>: Narcissism positively affects perceived organizational dissent (constructive articulated dissent, questioning articulated dissent, latent dissent, displaced dissent).
- H<sub>3</sub>: Psychopathy positively affects perceived organizational dissent (constructive articulated dissent, questioning articulated dissent, latent dissent, displaced dissent).

The sample of the research is composed of 322 white-collar employees who had been contacted from private-sector firms in the city of Bursa using the convenience sampling method. The sample size has been stated as needing to be at least five times the number of observed variables (Gorsuch, 1983, Bryman & Cramer, 2001). The number of variables in the research is 37, and receiving responses from 322 people is considered sufficient for performing the statistical analysis.

In the data collection process, a personal information form, the Dark Triad Scale (DT-S) and the Organizational Dissent Scale (OD-S) have been used. The DT-S was developed by Jonason and Webster (2010), and the Turkish adaptation performed by Özsoy & Ardiç (2017) has been used in this research. The OD-S, developed by Kassing (1998), has been utilized for measuring organizational dissent. The scale was adapted to Turkish by Ötken & Cenkci (2013; Cenkci & Ötken, 2014). As a result of the adaptation process, four sub-dimensions emerged. In this research, the Turkish adaptation of the OD-S has been used.

Exploratory factor analysis has been used to determine the factor structures of the DT-S and OD-S. The DT-S is split into three factors in accordance with the literature. It has a KMO value of .847, and Barlett's test value ( $X^2 = 1532,25$ ) is significant ( $p < 0.001$ ). The three factors explain 63.64% of the total variance. Cronbach's alpha for the reliability of scale is .851. The OD-S is gathered under four factors, similar to the literature. The point that needs to be emphasized here is that articulated dissent is divided into two dimensions: constructive articulated dissent and questioning articulated dissent (Kaya, 2016); the scale is divided into a total of four factors (Ataç & Köse, 2017; Ötken & Cenkci, 2013). The KMO value for the scale is .831, and Barlett's test value ( $X^2 = 2599,746$ ) is significant ( $p < 0,001$ ). The four factors explain 69,38% of the total variance. Cronbach's alpha for the scale is .819, which shows it to be a reliable measurement tool.

After conducting the exploratory factor analysis to examine the factor structure, confirmatory factor analysis was then performed to test the measurement model. Confirmatory factor analysis was performed using the factor structure obtained in the exploratory factor analysis. The results of the confirmatory factor analysis show the

goodness-of-fit indices for DT-S ( $X^2/df = 3.297$ ;  $RMSEA = .085$ ;  $GFI = .924$ ;  $CFI = .921$ ;  $NFI = .892$ ;  $TLI = .898$ ) and OD-S ( $X^2/df = 1.969$ ;  $RMSEA = .055$ ;  $GFI = .930$ ;  $CFI = .962$ ;  $NFI = .927$ ;  $TLI = .954$ ) to be at acceptable levels (Marsh, 2012; Hooper et al., 2008; Simon et al., 2010). After assessing the factor loadings and goodness-of-fit values, the average variance extracted (*AVE*) and compound reliability (*CR*) have been evaluated for DT-S and OD-S. The *AVE* values for DT-S (Machiavellianism = .56; Narcissism = .36; Psychopathy = .58), *AVE* values for OD-S (latent dissent = .68; constructive articulated dissent = .65; questioning articulated dissent = .44; displaced dissent = .66), *CR* values for DT-S (Machiavellianism = .83; Narcissism = .69; Psychopathy = .85), and *CR* values for OD-S (latent dissent = .89; constructive articulated dissent = .88; questioning articulated dissent = .79; displaced dissent = .84) are all satisfactory (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). These results provide evidence of convergent and divergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

The structural model was tested after the measurement model. The goodness-of-fit indices show the proposed structural equation model to have good model-data fit. Hence, most indices are in the range of the recommended values ( $X^2/df = 2.280$ ;  $RMSEA = .063$ ;  $GFI = .856$ ;  $CFI = .897$ ;  $NFI = .832$ ;  $TLI = .884$ ). Paths in the structural model have been examined as well as the predictions for the parameters. Based upon the empirical results for the model,  $H_1$  and  $H_2$  have been rejected while  $H_3$  is supported. Results show narcissism to affect displaced dissent significantly ( $p < 0.05$ ) and negatively (-0.242). Psychopathy, on the other hand, significantly affects constructive articulated dissent (.486), displaced dissent (.384), and latent dissent (.298;  $p < 0.001$ ). Moreover, Machiavellianism doesn't affect organizational dissent.

This research contributes to the literature within the perspective of resource-based theory. Theory has macro-levels of analysis in the management and organization literature. However, this research draws attention to the micro-side of the theory and attempts to explain its hypothesis. For this purpose, the research aims to investigate the effect of the dark triad on organizational dissent. Research results show narcissism to affect displaced organizational dissent negatively. Psychopathy has also been determined to influence constructive articulated dissent, displaced dissent, and latent dissent positively.

Resource-based theory suggests that firms must create imitation barriers for sustainable competitive advantages. One of the most important resources for this is human capital, but human capital is risky as it can be transferred easily; it is unstable for the firm unlike other capitals like culture, machines, or plants. As such, firms have to manage their human resources for sustainable competitive advantage. Within this process investigating employees' personality characteristics and their dissent in organization is fundamental. If employees have a dark side to their personality and organizational-dissent behaviors, leaving the organization will be much easier

for them. In the end, this could result from a broken imitation barrier and loss of sustainable competitive advantage.

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