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The dark triad and organizational citizenship behavior in health care: The moderating role of positive emotions

Hadi AL-Abrrow ⬤ | Krar Muhsin Thajil | Hasan Oudah Abdullah | Sammar Abbas

The dark triad refers to a set of personality traits characteristic of narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy. Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) describes voluntary, cooperative actions that contribute to organizational effectiveness. A study focused on the health-care sector in Iraq investigates the therapeutic role that positive emotions might play in offsetting the negative effects of the dark triad on OCB. Data from 414 employees in four public hospitals show that the dark triad has a significant negative impact on OCB, but that positive emotions can play a role in reversing this. This finding leads to several implications for both managers and researchers. In particular, it highlights the importance of addressing the interaction between positive and negative emotions, as well as the positive organizational outcomes that potentially could result from dark triad traits.

1 | INTRODUCTION

Organizational leaders expect their employees to willingly participate in the processes and procedures that are needed to ensure the organization's survival and prosperity (AL-Abrrow, Abdullah, & Atshan, 2019; Jahangir, Akbar, & Haq, 2004). Increasingly, they also want them to manifest extra-role organizational citizenship behavior (OCB)—that is, voluntary activities that are not part of their formal job description (Williams & Anderson, 1991). Although some have argued that managers ought to develop ways to facilitate the growth of OCB (Katz, 1964), most of the time such efforts remain unrecognized by the organization's formal reward systems (Kinicki & Fugate, 2018).

Evidence shows that OCB contributes to the strength of an organization (Ahmad, Rahim, Chulan, Ab Wahab, & Noor, 2019; Luu, 2019; Pham, Tučková, & Jabbour, 2019), whether for-profit or not-for-profit (Arar & Nasra, 2019; Blondheim & Somech, 2019; Zaman, Marri, Sadozai, & Ramay, 2012). Similarly, it has been shown to have a positive effect on teamwork, employee loyalty, and job satisfaction, and that it can reduce employee turnover and absenteeism (Chahal & Mehta, 2010; He, Zhang, & Morrison, 2019).

According to agency theory, managers (agents) are the representatives of an organization, and they reflect its characteristics (Guilding, Warnken, Ardill, & Fredline, 2005). Consequently, employees will perceive any negative managerial characteristics as indicative of the organization, and this will have a negative impact on their discretionary extra-role actions. Thus, when managers think about encouraging OCB, they must consider the effect of their own personality traits on the behavior of others in the organization (Kinicki & Fugate, 2018).

Most previous studies of OCB have focused on positive personality traits, although negative traits may merit equal examination. Recently, however, researchers have begun to investigate the effect of certain negative personality traits on organizational behavior (Palmer, Komarraju, Carter, & Karau, 2017). In particular, they have addressed the so-called dark triad of narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy (Robbins & Judge, 2017).