Can Dark Triad Traits in Leaders Be Associated with Positive Outcomes of Transformational Leadership: Cultural Differences

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Abstract

Research that combines dark triad traits and positive leadership styles or outcomes is welcome but still scarce. A quasi-experimental study investigated the mediating role of transformational leadership in linking dark triad leader traits with followers' extra effort, leadership effectiveness, satisfaction with a leader and the moderating role of culture to these relationships. The moderated mediation model was tested with data from 189 respondents (109 from Lithuania and 80 from Turkey). Participants were asked to answer sociodemographic questions, read one out of five scenarios with hypothetical leaders, and rate those leaders with Dirty Dozen and Multifactor Leadership Questionnaires. Results showed that transformational leadership mediated the relationships for dark triad leader traits with followers' extra effort, leadership effectiveness and satisfaction with a leader. Conditional indirect effects of a leader's dark triad traits on three leadership outcomes (followers' extra effort, leadership effectiveness and satisfaction with a leader) were significant only for Lithuanians. Negative traits were related to less positive outcomes through lower transformational leadership. This effect was stronger in the Lithuanian sample.

Keywords: dark triad traits, transformational leadership, extra effort, satisfaction with a leader, leadership effectiveness, culture, quasi-experiment

Introduction

For a long time, leadership research was oriented towards positive aspects: positive leader's characteristics, positive leadership styles and positive outcomes. Zhu and colleagues' (2019) bibliometric analysis of leadership articles collected from the Web of Science database from 1990 to 2017 showed that only 10% of the most influential leadership works analysed negative aspects of leadership (e.g., abusive supervision). However, problems with leadership and especially with dark leaders cost organisations a lot of money and we lack research-based

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recommendations on how to deal with that (Westover, Forbes, 27 May 2020).

Early trait theories of leadership examined specific personality traits and characteristics that distinguished leaders from followers (Nawaz & Khan, 2016). However, researchers focused on positive characteristics, such as creativity, consciousness, intuition, confidence, charisma etc. (Kibbe, 2019). The model of dark triad traits was introduced by Paulhus and Wiliams in 2002, but its application in leadership research came a bit later. With reference to Piotrowski (2018), it is still underestimated.

Research that combines dark triad traits and positive leadership styles or outcomes is welcome but still scarce (Arnold, 2017; Zaccaro et al., 2018), especially in the context of dominant leadership theory – transformational leadership (Tal & Gordon, 2016). "If positive can be negative" (how transformational leadership can lead to negative outcomes) has been already questioned (van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013) and investigated (e.g., Anderson & Sun, 2015; Zwingmann et al., 2016). However, "if negative can be positive" (how dark triad traits can lead to transformational leadership style and positive outcomes) is still unclear, with only a few attempts to research it (e.g., Contreras & Espinosa, 2019).

The topic of circumstances under which such associations could occur also deserves attention. Cultural context can become an important factor when dark leaders are associated with transformational leadership style and its outcomes (Crede et al., 2019). Therefore, our research model of relationships between dark triad traits and transformational leadership outcomes is expanded by an additional construct – culture.

This study contributes to the literature in the following ways. First, we analyse a leader's dark personality traits with positive leadership outcomes through transformational leadership. With reference to Derue and colleagues (2011), it is believed that leadership outcomes should be explained by an integrated trait-behavioural model. In this study, renewed trait research in leadership is combined with transformational leadership literature. We contribute to the debate by posing a question whether negative leader characteristics could be associated with positive outcomes through positive leadership behaviour. Second, a moderated mediation model is tested. A direct impact of a leader's dark triad traits on positive outcomes of leadership is investigated together with transformational leadership as mediator. Moreover, we analyse how culture moderates these relationships. Lithuanian and Turkish samples were used to test theoretical assumptions. Third, we employ a quasi-experimental design for this research. Hypothetical scenarios of leaders were used as stimulus. This enables us to talk about causal relationships.

Interdisciplinary leadership studies have not lost their relevance for a long time, e.g., personality psychology is providing insights about individual characteristics of leaders (commonly positive and recently negative ones) and organisational psychology together with management is seeking to define effective leadership and analyse outcomes of it. However, a relationship between the negative personality of

a leader and an effective leadership style that is related to positive outcomes requires united effort from researchers. Inclusion of significant contextual factors is another important issue that should be raised in frontier of leadership research. Moreover, different types (e.g., government and private) and sectors (e.g., education and healthcare) of organisations are waiting for evidence-based recommendations about leadership, from leader selection criteria through to evaluation and development programmes.

Therefore, in this article, we will present a model of dark triad personality traits and its application to leadership together with transformational leadership theory. Then, we will justify our assumptions about relationships between dark leaders, transformational leadership and its positive outcomes. Finally, we will analyse the importance of culture as a contextual factor for the relationships between dark leaders, transformational leadership, and its positive outcomes.

Dark Triad Personality Traits

In 2002 Paulhus and Williams introduced a Dark Triad personality model that included Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy. Callousness (the lack of empathy and humility) is the common characteristic that unites all three dark traits (Book et al., 2015; Furnham et al., 2013; Heym et al., 2019). However, each trait has its own specificity. The main element of Machiavellianism is manipulativeness (Belschak et al., 2015; Paulhus & Williams, 2002). Narcissism is exceptional because of its orientation towards self-egoistic admiration of idealised self-image (Ehrich & Ehrich, 2014; Paulhus & Williams, 2002). Finally, tough, aggressive, hostile tendencies characterise psychopathy (Boddy, 2006; Paulhus & Williams, 2002).

Moreover, each member of a dark triad has its maladaptive and adaptive elements (Furnham et al., 2013). Machiavellianism is related to unethical behaviour, fraudulence, bullying (Myung & Choi, 2017; Pilsh & Turska, 2015) and to flexible and active reactions in change situations, charming first impression, and objective decision-making (O'Boyle et al., 2012). Narcissism is associated both with aggression, tendency to exploit others, risky decision-making (Fatima, 2016; O'Boyle et al., 2012; Owens et al., 2015) and with self-confidence, charisma, sociability (Brunell et al., 2008; Humphreys et al., 2010; Jauk et al., 2016). Psychopathy also has its bright and dark side: it is related to asocial behaviour, impulsivity, emotional coldness (O'Boyle et al., 2012) and to high immunity to stress, intellectuality, and positive first impression (Boddy, 2015; Visser et al., 2010). The adaptive side of dark triad traits could be associated with leadership, especially as a prerequisite for becoming a leader.

There is some research (e.g., Contreras & Espinosa, 2019; Grijalva et al., 2015; Hong & Emagnaw, 2019; Spurk et al., 2016) confirming that people with dark triad traits are getting into leadership positions. However, we lack evidence of whether

dark leaders could be related to transformational leadership and its positive outcomes.

Transformational Leadership and Its Positive Outcomes

Tal and Gordon's (2016) bibliometric analysis confirmed that transformational leadership theory dominates in leadership research. Moreover, transformational leadership was an outstanding leadership style among the most influential leadership works between 1990 and 2017 (Zhu et al., 2019). Transformational leadership, presented by Bass and Avolio (2004), comprises 4 factors: idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration. Idealised influence is related to a leader's positive attributes (e.g., charisma) and acting upon high-order values in order to set an example to be followed. Inspirational motivation refers to the clear articulation and representation of a vision, a positive future, by the leader. Intellectual stimulation includes challenging the assumptions of followers' beliefs and encouraging their creativity and innovative thinking. Finally, individualised consideration emphasises a leader's attention to the individual needs of followers and support for the development of their strengths (Bass, 1999; Bass & Avolio, 2004).

The full-range leadership model, presented by Bass and Avolio (1997), identifies three main leadership outcomes: satisfaction with leadership, leadership effectiveness, and followers' extra effort. It is presumed that transformational leader shapes satisfaction (followers are satisfied with their leader's work methods), is productive (a leader is perceived as being effective when interacting at different levels of the organisation) and generates extra effort (a leader can influence followers to do more than they are expected) (Bass & Avolio, 2004; Bennett, 2009). Satisfaction is a more subjective feeling about the leader. Both followers' extra effort and effectiveness are associated with more objective criteria for leadership assessment. Usually, transformational leadership and its positive outcomes are researched in the context of positive antecedents (Hiller et al., 2011). The question remains whether a leader with dark triad traits can be evaluated as transformational and associated with leadership effectiveness, followers' extra effort and satisfaction with leadership.

Combination of Dark Triad Traits and Transformational Leadership, Its Positive Outcomes

Scientists of evolutionary psychology stated that dark triad traits remained because they were valuable for people in order to survive and adapt (Pilch, 2020). Research results have already confirmed that people with dark triad traits have a high need for power and succeed to become leaders in organisations (Jonason et al., 2012; Krick et al., 2016). So, what leaders are they? It seems that dark triad traits are more related to pseudo-transformational leadership with low idealised influence,

intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration, but high inspirational motivation. Pseudo-transformational leaders use manipulation (Machiavellianism), encourage dependence, unconditional loyalty, fear of a leader (psychopathy), are oriented towards their own aims (are self-serving), and demonstrate self-confidence and power (narcissism) (Barling et al., 2008; Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Christie et al., 2011; Lin et al., 2017). However, authentic transformational leadership and its components are also associated with hysterics, manipulation, over self-confidence and risky behaviour (Khoo & Burch, 2008).

The other question is about the outcomes dark leaders produce. Research confirmed that pseudo-transformational leadership was related to higher followers' dependence on a leader, insecurity, fear, obedience, less extra effort and lower satisfaction with a leader, trust, and reverence (Barling et al., 2008; Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Christie et al., 2011; Lin et al., 2017). However, charisma, an idealised influence of dark leaders in a short period can be an important condition for positive outcomes (Christie et al., 2011). Besides, high inspirational motivation (common both to pseudo-transformational and transformational leaders) shows the strongest impact on effective leader performance (Deinert et al., 2015). Charming first expression, sociability and intellectuality associated with dark triad personalities (see the section about dark triad personality traits) could also be related to satisfaction with leadership and leadership effectiveness until followers experienced that all these characteristics were used to manipulate them and seek selfish aims. So, it seems that the impact of dark triad traits on leadership outcomes is through the leadership style leaders choose to apply in the work environment.

Regarding the information presented above, we hypothesise that dark triad traits of a leader are related to leadership effectiveness, satisfaction with a leader and followers' extra effort through a transformational leadership style. Transformational leadership mediates the relationship between dark triad traits and followers' extra effort (Hypothesis 1a), leadership effectiveness (Hypothesis 1b), and satisfaction with a leader (Hypothesis 1c).

Cultural Differences in the Perception of Dark Leaders' Transformational Leadership

Presenting results of the GLOBE project's twenty-year journey, Dorfman and colleagues (2012) stated that followers' expectations of a leader and his/her leadership style were based on cultural values. Moreover, when leadership outcomes are assessed, the results of the evaluation depend on the fit between individual leader characteristics and cognitive followers' schemes about an acceptable leader (Zaccaro et al., 2018). Culture could be an important factor when explaining relationships among leaders' dark triad traits, transformational leadership, and its outcomes (Crede et al., 2019; Zwingmann et al., 2014).

Individualism-collectivism and power distance are among the most frequently discussed dimensions of national culture in the leadership literature (Schermerhorn & Bond, 1997). Zwingmann and colleagues (2014) confirmed that power distance moderates the relationship between transformational leadership and followers' well-being, and physical health (relationships are stronger under a High Power Distance culture). Dickson et al. (2003) emphasised that transformational leadership is more suitable in collectivistic than individualistic countries. Finally, Crede et al. (2019) stated that cultural values and practices moderated transformational leadership-employee performance relationships (relationships were stronger in cultures that were incongruent with transformational leadership). It could be that dark triad traits are also more acceptable in countries that are incongruent with transformational leadership (especially in countries with low egalitarianism, humane and future orientation, and high levels of uncertainty avoidance). With reference to the Hofstede culture compass, Lithuania could be described as Low Power Distance, individualist, feminine, high uncertainty-avoidant, and long-term oriented, restrained culture. In contrast, Turkey could be presented as High Power Distance, collectivistic, and less feminine but higher on uncertainty-avoidance than Lithuania, a culture with no dominant preference for long-term orientation and indulgence. Thus, Lithuanian and Turkish samples (representing different cultures) are chosen for empirical analysis of relationships between negative leader traits and positive leadership outcomes.

Our second presumption was that culture would moderate the strength of the mediated relationships between dark leader traits and followers' extra effort (Hypothesis 2a), leadership effectiveness (Hypothesis 2b), and satisfaction with a leader (Hypothesis 2c) via transformational leadership.

To put it in the frame of the moderated mediation model, we presumed that culture would moderate the strength of the indirect links between dark triad traits and leadership outcomes via transformational leadership, in such a way that the relationships of mediation would be stronger in Turkey than in Lithuania. A conceptual diagram of the model is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1

A Conceptual Diagram of the Investigated Model
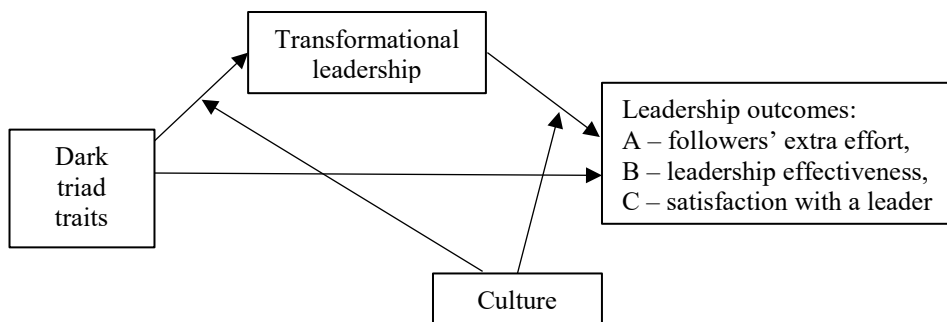
Method

Participants and Procedure

The quasi-experiment involved 189 participants (109 from Lithuania and 80 from Turkey). Their mean age was 22.14 (*SD* = 3) (*M* = 24.20 [*SD* = 1.52] in the Lithuanian sample and *M* = 23.44 [*SD* = 3.92] in the Turkish sample). Females comprised 69% of participants (19 men and 90 women from Lithuania, and 39 men and 41 women from Turkey). Half of them were studying, 27% studying and working at the same time, 20% only working and 3% chose the option "other activity". With reference to calculation using G*Power, 80 participants are enough for moderation analysis, with medium effect size (f sq) – 0.10, power of .80, and 3 predictors (for a simple moderation model).

Non-probability sampling method – convenience sampling – was used in the research. Respondents were asked to participate in the research using the Facebook platform – in particular groups. Confidentiality of their individual answers was assured. Participants were asked to answer sociodemographic questions, read one out of five scenarios (they had to choose a number in order to show that they were not a robot and scenarios were assigned automatically to the particular number), and rate the leader in the assigned scenario with Dirty Dozen and Multifactor Leadership Questionnaires.

The research was conducted considering the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki, including respect for individuals, the right to make informed decisions, research ethics, and national laws of research ethics.

Measures

Quasi-experiment with scenarios as the stimulus was used in the research. The authors developed five scenarios that represented hypothetical leaders with different patterns of Dark triad traits (Machiavellianism, psychopathy and narcissism) expression. All three DT traits were highly expressed in "the bad leader" scenario. The opposite leader's DT traits expression was in the "the good leader" scenario. The other three scenarios represented one particular leader trait: "the Machiavellian leader", "the psychopathic leader" and "the narcissistic leader". All scenarios were gender-neutral. Scenarios and questionnaires were prepared in the participants' mother tongue (Lithuanian and Turkish). More thorough information about the development of scenarios is presented in the scientific publication by Vadvilavičius and Stelmokienė (2019).

Participants filled in the 12-item Dirty Dozen Scale (Jonason & Webster, 2010) indicating how much they agreed with the statement about the hypothetical leader in the scenario (e.g., "I tend to manipulate others to get my way"; "I tend to lack remorse"; "I tend to want others to admire me") on a seven-point Likert scale (from

1 – *strongly disagree*, to 7 – *strongly agree*). This instrument measures general DT traits expression (Cronbach α = .85).

Transformational leadership and its outcomes were assessed with a Multifactorial Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ; Bass & Avolio, 2004). MLQ consists of 45 items about leader behaviour (e.g., "Leader talks optimistically about the future"; "Leader spends time teaching and coaching") and leadership outcomes rated on a five-point Likert scale (from 0 – *not at all*, to 4 – *frequently, if not always*). MLQ allows measuring the three leadership styles (Transformational, Transactional, and Laissez-faire) and three leadership outcomes (followers' extra effort, satisfaction with a leader, and leadership effectiveness). Only Transformational leadership and leadership outcomes were measured in this study. Cronbach alpha coefficient of Transformational leadership was .88, followers' extra effort .75, satisfaction with a leader .67 and leadership effectiveness .74.

Each participant got only one scenario. So, 31 persons evaluated "the bad leader" scenario, 28 – "the good leader" scenario, 47 – "the Machiavellian leader", 47 – "the psychopathic leader" and 36 – "the narcissistic leader" scenario.

Data Analyses

The first step in the data analysis was to evaluate means, standard deviations, and correlations of the main study variables. In the second round, the mediation model where dark triad leader traits were related to leadership outcomes through transformational leadership was tested. Finally, culture was added as a moderator and moderated mediation model was investigated.

The data were analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.0 and Hayes' PROCESS macro (version 3.5) for testing moderated mediation (Hayes, 2018). The chosen statistical significance level was .05. Indices of the indirect effect of moderated mediation were considered statistically significant if the 95% CI, estimated using the bootstrap method (n = 10 000), did not include zero.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Means, standard deviations and correlations of the continuous study variables are reported in Tables 1a and 1b.

Table 1a

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations among the Continuous Study Variables in the Whole Sample

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3a	3b
1. Dark triad traits	4.97	1.40				
2. Transformational leadership	1.88	0.83	-.51			
3. Leadership outcomes:						
a) followers' extra effort	1.83	1.26	-.39	.82		
b) satisfaction with a leader	1.82	1.25	-.45	.83	.83	
c) leadership effectiveness	1.86	1.13	-.47	.84	.85	.83

Note. All correlations in the table are significant, $p < .001$.

Table 1b

Descriptive Statistics of the Continuous Study Variables in Separate Hypothetical Leader Scenarios

Variable	"the bad leader" M (SD)	"the good leader" M (SD)	"the Machiavellian leader" M (SD)	"the psychopathic leader" M (SD)	"the narcissistic leader" M (SD)	F; η^2
1. *Dark triad traits*	5.88 (0.75)	3.08 (1.33)	5.22 (1.03)	5.48 (1.16)	4.69 (1.25)	28.62[*], .38
2. *Transformational leadership*	1.51 (0.69)	2.80 (0.62)	1.74 (0.73)	1.15 (0.83)	2.13 (0.64)	17.87[*], .28
3. *Leadership outcomes:*						
a) followers' extra effort	1.46 (0.15)	3.14 (0.94)	1.53 (1.16)	1.29 (1.18)	2.22 (1.02)	15.35[*], .25
b) satisfaction with a leader	1.19 (0.95)	3.18 (0.85)	1.73 (1.19)	1.31 (1.18)	2.09 (0.91)	16.87[*], .27
c) leadership effectiveness	1.35 (0.90)	3.18 (0.68)	1.57 (1.09)	1.38 (1.01)	2.27 (0.88)	21.54[*], .32

Note. "The bad leader" scenario scored significantly higher in the Dark triad, lower in Transformational leadership, satisfaction with a leader, and leadership effectiveness compared to "the good leader" and "the narcissistic leader" scenarios, and lower in followers` extra effort compared only to "the good leader" scenario; "the good leader" scenario scored lowest in Dark triad and highest in Transformational and all leadership outcomes compared to other scenarios; "the Machiavellian leader" scenario scored lower in leadership effectiveness compared to "the narcissistic leader" scenario; "the psychopathic leader" scored higher in Dark triad, lower in Transformational leadership and all leadership outcomes compared to "the narcissistic leader" scenario. No other significant differences were revealed. [*]$p < .001$.

Dark triad traits negatively correlated with transformational leadership and its outcomes. The stronger the expression of hypothetical leaders' dark triad traits, the lower perceived transformational leadership and its outcomes were. Additionally, the
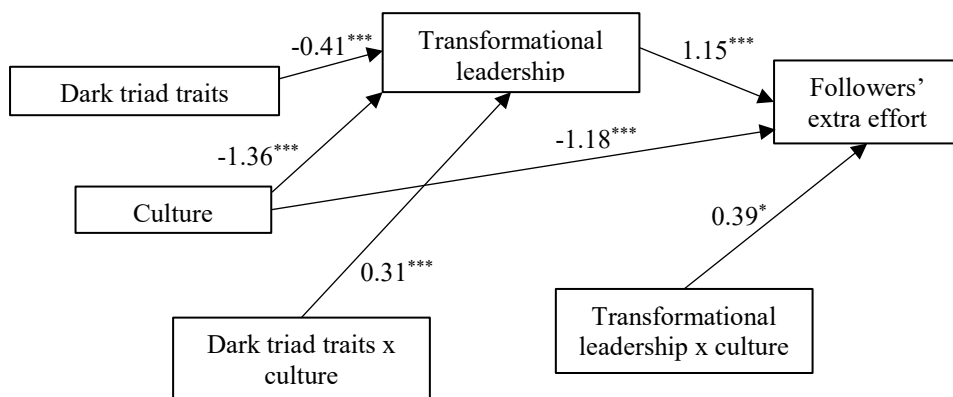
lower the perceived transformational leadership, the fewer followers' extra effort, lower satisfaction with a leader and weaker leadership effectiveness were. All bivariate correlations were statistically significant ($p < .001$).

Moderated Mediation Effects

The results of the moderated mediation model are presented in Figures 2a, 2b and 2c.

Figure 2a

The Relationship between Hypothetical Leader's Dark Triad Traits and Followers' Extra Effort via Perceived Transformational Leadership

Note. Unstandardized regression coefficients are presented in the figure. $^*p < .05$; $^{**}p < .01$; $^{***}p < .001$.
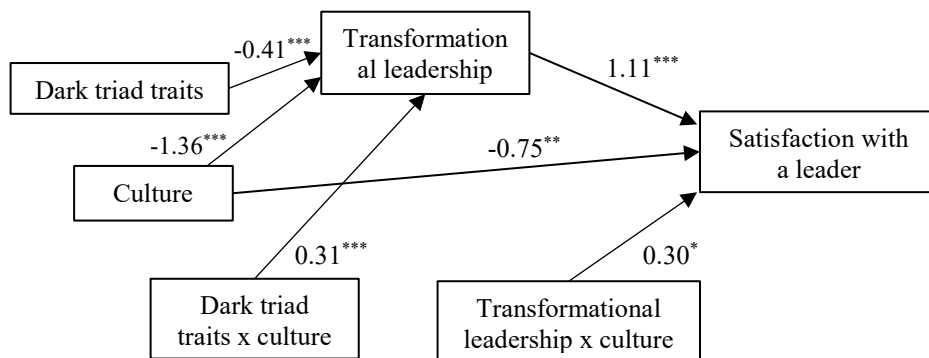
Figure 2b

The Relationship between Hypothetical Leader's Dark Triad Traits and Leadership Effectiveness via Perceived Transformational Leadership
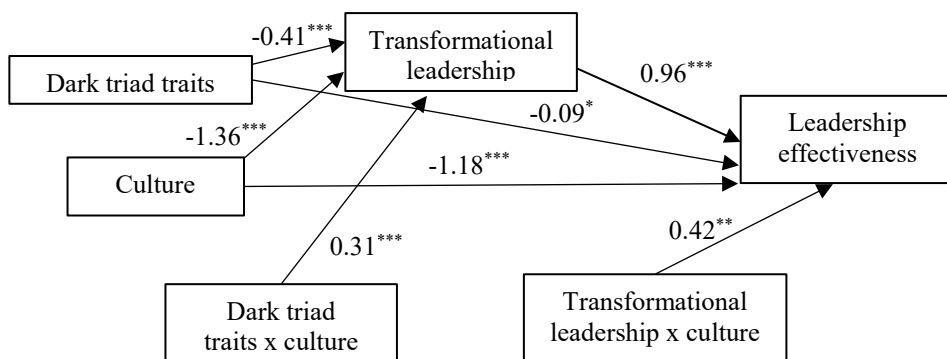
Note. Unstandardized regression coefficients are presented in the figure. $^*p < .05$; $^{**}p < .01$; $^{***}p < .001$.

Figure 2c

The Relationship between Hypothetical Leader's Dark Triad Traits and Satisfaction with a Leader via Perceived Transformational Leadership

Note. Unstandardized regression coefficients are presented in the figure. $^*p < .05$; $^{**}p < .01$; $^{***}p < .001$.

The results showed the significant direct negative effect of a hypothetical leader's dark triad traits only on one leadership outcome – leadership effectiveness. As the expression of a leader's dark triad traits increased, perceived leadership effectiveness decreased. However, transformational leadership mediated the relationship between a leader's dark triad traits and all three leadership outcomes: followers' extra effort, leadership effectiveness and satisfaction with a leader. As an expression of a leader's dark triad traits increased, ratings of transformational leadership decreased, and as perceived transformational leadership decreased, so did ratings of leadership outcomes: followers' extra effort, leadership effectiveness and satisfaction with a leader (see Figures 2a, 2b, 2c and Table 2).

Table 2

The Effect of Culture on the Relationship between Hypothetical Leader's Dark Triad Traits and Leadership Outcomes via Perceived Transformational Leadership

Predictors	B	Est./S.E.	LLCI	ULCI
	Transformational leadership			
Dark triad	-0.41***	0.04	-0.50	-0.32
Culture	-1.36**	0.37	-2.18	-0.61
Dark triad x culture	0.31***	0.07	0.16	0.46
F	30.73***			
R^2	.33			
R^2 change (unconditional interaction)	.06***			

|	B	Est./S.E.	LLCI	ULCI
	Followers' extra effort			
Dark triad	-0.01	0.04	-0.09	0.07
Transformational leadership	1.15***	0.08	0.98	1.32
Culture	-1.18***	0.28	-1.73	-0.63
Transformational leadership x culture	0.39*	0.13	0.12	0.65
F	116.48***			
R^2	.71			
R^2 change (unconditional interaction)	.01**			
	Leadership effectiveness			
Dark triad	-0.09*	0.06	-0.16	-0.02
Transformational leadership	0.96***	0.07	0.81	1.10
Culture	-1.18***	0.23	-1.65	-0.72
Transformational leadership x culture	0.42**	0.11	0.21	0.64
F	140.58***			
R^2	.75			
R^2 change (unconditional interaction)	.02***			
	Satisfaction with a leader			
Dark triad	-0.06	0.04	-0.14	0.01
Transformational leadership	1.11***	0.08	0.94	1.28
Culture	-0.75**	0.27	-1.30	-0.20
Transformational leadership x culture	0.30*	0.13	0.04	0.56
F	115.32***			
R^2	.71			
R^2 change (unconditional interaction)	.00*			

Note. Culture was dummy coded (0 = Lithuania; 1 = Turkey). LLCI: Lower Limit Confidence Interval; ULCI: Upper Limit Confidence Interval. ***$p < .001$; **$p < .01$; *$p < .05$.

Culture was in direct relationship with perceived transformational leadership and all three leadership outcomes. Lithuanians evaluated a hypothetical leader as more transformational in comparison with Turkish respondents. Lithuanians' ratings of followers' extra effort, leadership effectiveness and satisfaction with a leader were higher, as well. Moreover, culture moderated both the relationship between dark triad traits and transformational leadership and the relationship between transformational leadership and three leadership outcomes (see Figures 2a, 2b, 2c and Table 2).

The Simple slope test (see Figure 3) indicated that the relationship between dark triad traits and transformational leadership was stronger in Lithuanian culture. However, the relationships between transformational leadership and leadership outcomes – followers' extra effort, leadership effectiveness and satisfaction with a leader – were stronger in Turkish culture than among Lithuanians (see Figure 4a, 4b and 4c). The effect size of interactions was small, though significant (see Table 2).
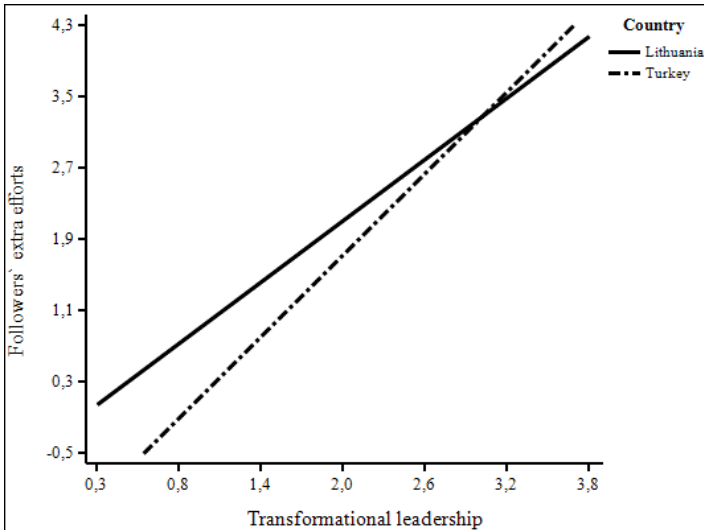
Figure 3

The Effect of Culture on the Relationship between Leaders' Dark Triad Traits and Perceived Transformational Leadership
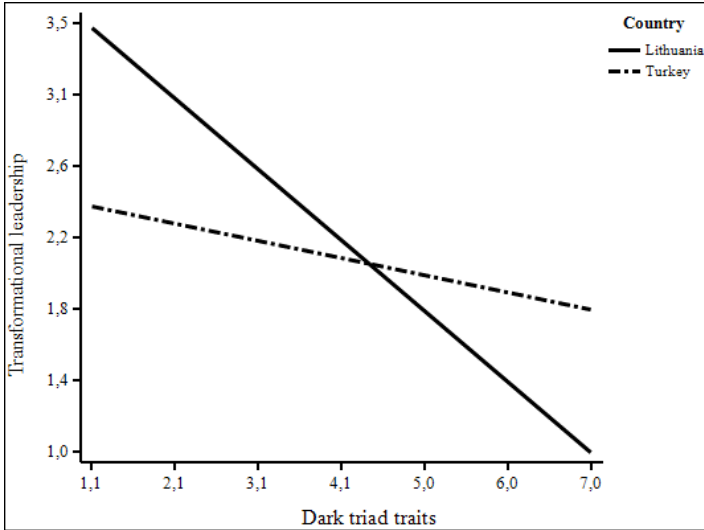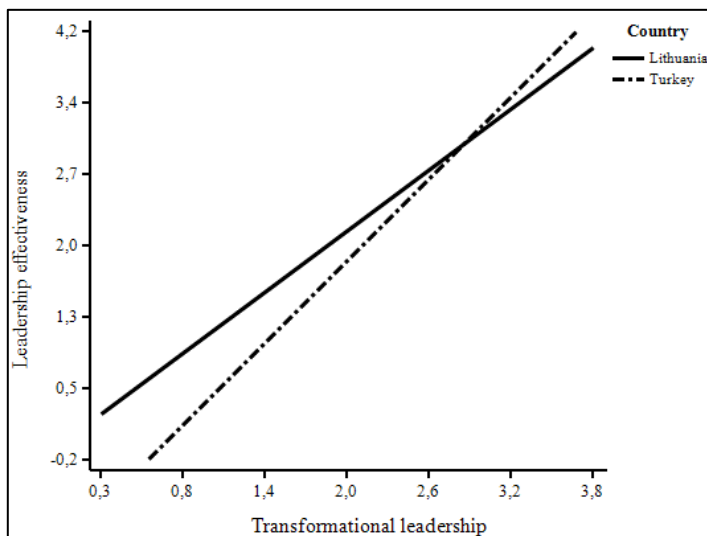

Figure 4a

The Effect of Culture on the Relationship between Perceived Transformational Leadership and Followers' Extra Effort
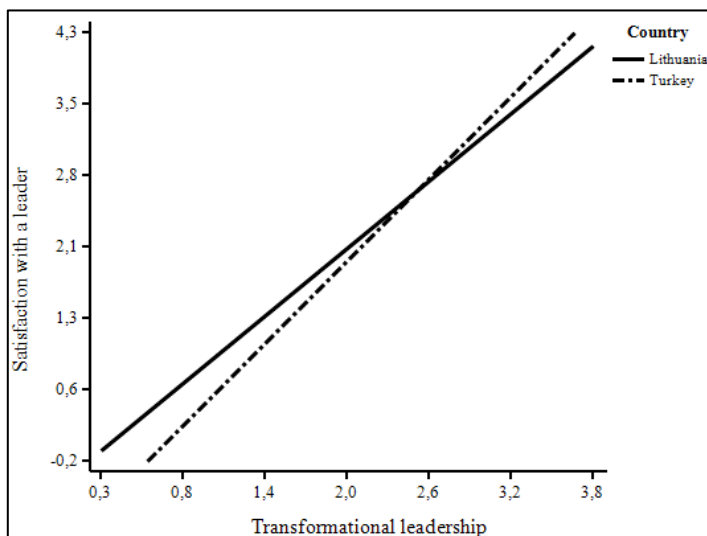
Figure 4b

The Effect of Culture on the Relationship between Perceived Transformational Leadership and Leadership Effectiveness

Figure 4c

The Effect of Culture on the Relationship between Perceived Transformational Leadership and Satisfaction with a Leader

Conditional indirect effects of a leader's dark triad traits on three leadership outcomes (followers' extra effort, leadership effectiveness and satisfaction with a leader) for different moderator values are presented in Table 3. The conditional indirect effects were significant only in Lithuanian culture.

Table 3

The Conditional Indirect Effects of Leader's Dark Triad Traits on Leadership Outcomes for Different Moderator Values

Leadership outcome	Indirect effects	Effect	BootSE	BootCI	Index of moderated mediation
Followers' extra effort	Lithuania	-.47	.055	[-.587; -.370]	.321
	Turkey	-.15	.085	[-.321; .019]	
Leadership effectiveness	Lithuania	-.39	.044	[-.486; -.311]	.258
	Turkey	-.13	.076	[-.284; .015]	
Satisfaction with a leader	Lithuania	-.45	.057	[-.577; -.351]	.319
	Turkey	-.14	.077	[-.290; .016]	

Discussion

The central goal of this study was to examine how negative leader characteristics (dark triad traits) could be associated with desirable outcomes (follower's extra effort, leadership effectiveness and satisfaction with a leader) through positive leadership (transformational leadership). The impact of culture on these relationships was investigated, as well. Our presumption that dark triad traits of a leader were related to leadership effectiveness, satisfaction with a leader and followers' extra effort through transformational leadership style was confirmed. Traits could be proposed as distal factors of leadership outcomes as was in the research of Ng et al. (2008): they proved the significant distal relationships between the Big Five traits and leader effectiveness together with the mediating role of leadership self-efficacy. In our study, the impact of negative traits on leadership outcomes was through leadership behaviour as was reported by Zaccaro (2007) that investigated positive traits. The study was also in line with Derue and colleagues' (2011) integrative model where leader behaviour mediated the relationship between leader traits and leadership effectiveness. With reference to our moderated mediation model, as an expression of a leader's dark triad traits increased, ratings of transformational leadership decreased, and as perceived transformational leadership decreased, so did ratings of leadership outcomes: followers' extra effort, leadership effectiveness and satisfaction with a leader. It seems that the relationships between negative leader traits and positive leadership style are only negative.

Additionally, the results showed the significant direct negative effect of hypothetical leader's dark triad traits only on one leadership outcome – leadership

effectiveness. Dark triad traits were directly related only to a more objective evaluation of a leader – leadership effectiveness. It was clear that the leader with dark triad traits could not be evaluated as working effectively. A prototypical effective leader is usually characterised by positive traits, while an ineffective leader by negative ones (Judge et al., 2009). In our study, negative traits of hypothetical leaders led to lower ratings of leadership effectiveness, as well. It should be admitted that transformational leadership had a greater impact on different leadership outcomes than directly did dark triad traits. Derue and colleagues (2011) confirmed this tendency with positive leader traits.

Our findings offered support for the hypothesis that culture moderated the strength of the mediated relationships between dark leader traits and followers' extra effort, leadership effectiveness, and satisfaction with a leader via transformational leadership. Conditional indirect effects of a leader's dark triad traits on three leadership outcomes (followers' extra effort, leadership effectiveness and satisfaction with a leader) were significant only for Lithuanians. Lithuanians were strict evaluators: if a leader was dark, he or she could not be positive. The higher a hypothetical leader's dark triad traits, the lesser were followers' extra effort, with lower leadership effectiveness and satisfaction with a leader through lower transformational leadership. It seems that only in Lithuania dark triad traits are related to less positive outcomes through lower transformational leader behaviour. However, as in the research of Crede and colleagues (2019), the relationships between transformational leadership and leadership outcomes – followers' extra effort, leadership effectiveness and satisfaction with a leader – were stronger in Turkish culture (that is seen as less congruent with transformational leadership than Lithuanian culture).

Additionally, culture was in direct relationship with perceived transformational leadership and all three leadership outcomes. Lithuanians evaluated a hypothetical leader as more transformational in comparison with Turkish respondents. Lithuanians' ratings of extra effort, leadership effectiveness and satisfaction with a leader were also higher. It could be stated that transformational leadership was more congruent with Lithuanian culture (low power distance, feminine, less uncertainty-avoidant than Turkey) (Dickson et al., 2003). Therefore, transformational leadership as positive leader behaviour was strongly negatively related to dark triad traits – the negative side of personality.

This study makes three important contributions to the literature. First of all, the dark triad personality traits model was applied to leadership research together with transformational leadership theory. An interdisciplinary approach was introduced. The previously integrated trait-behavioural model of leadership effectiveness was used only with positive traits (Derue et al., 2011).

Second, we adopted a behavioural focus to explain the link between personality and leadership effectiveness, followers' extra effort and satisfaction with a leader. It was suggested for future research in an Ng et al. article (2008). Our study

demonstrated that transformational leadership was a fruitful mediator explaining relationships between dark triad traits and leadership outcomes.

Finally, the moderated mediation model confirmed the importance of culture when examining the link between personality, transformational leadership and leadership outcomes. With reference to previous research, a relationship between transformational leadership and leadership outcomes was more likely to vary across national cultural characteristics (Li et al., 2021).

Our findings also have several practical implications for the selection and development of leaders. Dark triad traits are distal yet important characteristics of a leader when we are talking about positive leadership outcomes. Therefore, an assessment of the leader personality should be included in selection procedures. Behavioural patterns of transformational leadership could be proposed for the development programmes. This style is a proximal factor that affects leadership outcomes.

These recommendations are even more important in Lithuanian organisations, as Lithuanian culture strengthened relationships between dark triad traits and leadership outcomes through transformational leadership. International organisations with Lithuanian employees should also take this message into account.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This study has certain limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. Quasi-experimental design should enable discussion of causal relationships. However, respondents evaluated hypothetical leaders in the scenarios, so we cannot be confident that the same results would appear while assessing real leaders. Future research should attempt to replicate a moderated mediation model in a real setting. Besides, it should be admitted that we had gender differences in the Lithuanian and Turkish samples. With reference to the results of additional regression analysis – gender was not a significant predictor of transformational leadership, dark triad, and leadership outcomes (extra effort, leadership satisfaction, and effectiveness). However, more balanced samples would be preferable in future research.

Our moderated mediation model could be expanded to examine both behavioural and motivational mechanisms that enhance understanding of the process through which personality affects leadership outcomes. Moreover, the particular traits from the dark triad could be added to analyses, as researchers are still debating the multidimensionality of the dark triad (e.g., Jonason & Luévano, 2013; Persson et al., 2019). Inclusion of more countries with different cultural dimensions could also be a valuable enrichment.

To sum up, our research confirmed an integrated trait-behaviour model of leadership outcomes: transformational leadership mediated the relationships for dark triad leader traits with followers' extra effort, leadership effectiveness and

satisfaction with a leader. Conditional indirect effects of a leader's dark triad traits on three leadership outcomes (followers' extra effort, leadership effectiveness and satisfaction with a leader) were significant only for Lithuanians.

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Mogu li se osobine tamne trijade kod vođa povezati s pozitivnim ishodima transformacijskoga vodstva: Kulturne razlike

Sažetak

Istraživanja koja kombiniraju osobine tamne trijade i pozitivne stilove ili ishode vodstva poželjna su, ali još uvijek rijetka. Medijatorska uloga transformacijskoga vodstva u povezivanju osobina tamne trijade kod vođe s dodatnim naporima sljedbenika, učinkovitošću vodstva i zadovoljstvom vođom te moderirajuća uloga kulture u tim odnosima provjerena je kvazieksperimentalnim nacrtom. Model moderirane medijacije testiran je s podacima prikupljenima na 189 ispitanika (109 iz Litve i 80 iz Turske). Sudionici su odgovorili na sociodemografska pitanja, pročitali jedan od pet scenarija s opisom hipotetskih vođa i ocijenili vođe pomoću upitnika Prljavih dvanaest i Višefaktorskoga upitnika rukovođenja. Prema dobivenim je rezultatima transformacijsko vodstvo posredovalo u odnosima osobina tamne trijade kod vođe s dodatnim naporima sljedbenika, učinkovitošću vodstva i zadovoljstvom vođom. Uvjetni neizravni učinci osobina tamne trijade kod vođe na tri ishoda vodstva (dodatni napori sljedbenika, učinkovitost vodstva i zadovoljstvo vođom) bili su značajni samo za Litavce. Negativne osobine bile su povezane s manje pozitivnim ishodima kroz niže transformacijsko vodstvo. Taj je učinak bio jači u uzorku sudionika iz Litve.

Ključne riječi: osobine tamne trijade, transformacijsko vodstvo, dodatni napori, zadovoljstvo vođom, učinkovitost vođenja, kultura, kvazieksperiment