
LEADERSHIP, WELL-BEING AT WORK AND THE DARK TRIAD: AN ANALYSIS OF THE PERCEPTION OF BRAZILIAN EMPLOYEES

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ABSTRACT

The study seeks to analyze the influence of the Dark Triad traits in leaders on the well-being of employees at the workplace. For this purpose, a survey was carried out with 268 Brazilian employees. Descriptive statistics, the test of hypotheses, multiple regressions and logistics were applied. The results showed a major perception of leaders with narcissistic traits and a greater sense of fulfillment at work by employees. The well-being dimensions related to positive, negative and fulfillment affects differ in the presence of leaders with Machiavellian and psychopathic traits. The three traits were positively associated with negative emotions and moods in the work environment and negatively associated with positive and fulfillment affects at work. The stronger the Machiavellian traits, the higher the propensity for negative affects, and the lower the propensity for positive and fulfillment affects. The results provide an opportunity for reflection on the actions of leaders with strong traits of the dark triad, which interfere with positive feelings and emotions and impact on employees' prospects for professional fulfillment. They raise the debate about the behavioral consequences of leaders with these traits in the work environment during the pandemic crisis, given the direct impact on organizational productivity and employees' mental health. Furthermore, they propose a more careful look at educational settings and leadership competency development programs, aiming to promote empathy, a search for altruism, and life-oriented values, which consider the appreciation of groups and general well-being.

Keywords: Well-being at work. Dark Triad. Leadership.

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LIDERANÇA, BEM-ESTAR NO TRABALHO E O DARK TRIAD: ANÁLISE DA PERCEPÇÃO DE COLABORADORES BRASILEIROS

RESUMO

O estudo objetiva a análise da influência dos traços de personalidade do *Dark Triad* em líderes sobre o bem-estar no trabalho de colaboradores. Para tanto, foi aplicado um *survey* com 268 colaboradores brasileiros. A estatística descritiva, o teste de hipóteses, as regressões múltipla e logística foram aplicadas. Os resultados evidenciaram que os colaboradores percebem seus líderes com traços narcisistas. Quanto ao bem-estar no trabalho, os colaboradores exibiram maior sentimento de realização no trabalho. As dimensões do bem-estar relativas aos afetivos positivos, negativos e de realização, mostraram-se diferentes na presença de líderes com traços maquiavélicos e psicopáticos. Os três traços associaram-se positivamente às emoções e aos humores negativos no ambiente laboral e negativamente aos afetos positivos e de realização no trabalho. Quanto mais fortes os traços maquiavélicos, maior a propensão para afetos negativos e menor propensão para afetos positivos e de realização. Os resultados oportunizam a reflexão sobre as ações de líderes com traços elevados da tríade sombria que interferem nos sentimentos e emoções positivas e impactam nas perspectivas de realização profissional dos colaboradores. Suscita o debate sobre os desdobramentos comportamentais de líderes ricos desses traços no ambiente laboral no período de crise pandêmica, haja vista o impacto direto na produtividade organizacional e saúde mental dos colaboradores. Ademais, implicam um olhar mais cuidadoso nos ambientes educacionais e programas de desenvolvimento de competências em liderança, com vistas a promover a empatia, busca de altruísmo e de valores de orientação para a vida, que considerem a valorização dos grupos e o bem-estar geral.

Palavras-Chave: Bem-estar no trabalho. *Dark Triad*. Liderança.

1 INTRODUCTION

In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, several structural, technological, and affective changes took place in the work environment in order to adapt employees to the new reality. New work relationships, interpersonal relationships, and leadership styles were established for the execution of work from home. Lack of knowledge of new practices and insecurity about the future at work can generate negative emotions and moods in employees and affect their well-being at work, mainly when these employees are led by managers who exhibit personality traits of dark personality traits.

The dark side of leadership has attracted the scientific community's attention, especially when studies investigate leaders endowed with personality traits from the Dark Triad, a constellation consisting of Machiavellianism, Narcissism, and Psychopathy. These three traits share aspects as insensitivity, manipulation, lack of friendliness, and dishonesty (Jones & Paulhus, 2014; Jonason & Webster, 2010). It is essential to consider that the seminal study on this triad (Paulhus &

Williams, 2002) is based on social and behavioral psychology, without clinical and diagnostic pretensions.

By relying on the literature to identify the individual characteristics of each trait, we found that strategy, future orientation, low ethical and moral standards, lack of principles, cynicism, and lies are characteristics of the Machiavellian trait. The narcissistic trait manifests itself through vanity, exhibitionism, authority, self-admiration, extroversion, and self-sufficiency. The trait of Psychopathy has an absence of guilt or remorse, impulsiveness, charm and superficial enchantment, low empathy, vulnerability, being considered the darkest trait of the triad (Jones & Paulhus, 2014; D'Souza, 2016).

Leaders with dark personality traits are less likely to abide by the rules (Triberti, Durosini, & Pravettoni, 2021). They have the skills and talents to lie, cheat, ridicule, and blame subordinates for their mistakes, leading to decreased performance and employee satisfaction at work as well as emotional exhaustion (Mathieu, Neumann, Hare, & Babiak, 2014; Volmer, Koch, & Göritz, 2016). These characteristics compromise well-being at work.

Well-being at work comprises the positive and the negative affect, consisting of emotions/moods, fulfilment, and the perception of expressiveness at work, considering the development of skills and potential for achieving personal goals. Although there are several concepts and strands on this theme, emotions and moods constitute the central dimension of the construct, in the conception that the positive affect is more frequent and intense than the negative affect in the work environment (Vilarinho, Paschoal, & Demo, 2021; Paschoal & Tamayo, 2008).

Studies on the subject have discussed leadership styles and organizational support (Sant'anna, Paschoal, & Gosendo, 2012), workers' health (Couto & Paschoal, 2012), career success (Agapito et al., 2015), opportunities to materialize personal values (Paschoal, Álvaro, & Porto et al., 2015) and professional performance in the context of Covid-19 (Vilarinho, Paschoal, & Demo, 2021). As Sant'anna, Paschoal and Gosendo (2012) state, well-being is an essential phenomenon for the proper and competitive functioning of the organization.

Against this backdrop, this study seeks to analyze the influence of the Dark Triad personality traits in leaders on the well-being of employees at work. For this purpose, a survey was carried out with 268 Brazilian employees. The goal is to verify whether employees perceive personality traits of the triad in their leaders and, after that, to investigate employees' well-being at the workplace. The results indicated a higher perception of leaders with narcissistic traits and a greater sense of fulfilment at work by employees. Positive, negative and fulfilment affective dimensions were different in the presence of leaders with Machiavellian and Psycho traits. The three traits were positively associated with negative emotions and moods in the work environment, and negatively associated with positive and fulfilment affects at work. In addition, it was noticed that the stronger the Machiavellian traits of the leaders, the higher the propensity for negative affects and the lower the propensity for positive and fulfilment affects.

These findings provide an opportunity to unpack the theoretical and practical contribution of this study, as well as its relevance and impacts. It brings to the national debate a theme that is still underexplored in the organizational area, given that previous studies have focused on relating the features of the Dark Triad

to the following aspects: managerial performance (Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007); overconfidence and risk-taking (D'Souza & Lima, 2021; Lakey et al., 2008); fraud (Johnson et al., 2013; Murphy, 2012); earnings management (Gois, Lima, & De Luca, 2020; Silva, Cunha, & D'Souza, 2020); results management and social responsibility (Shafer, 2015).

Few studies are dedicated to understanding the effects and implications of dark traits in the work environment. For the most part, emphasis is placed on the following discussion: counterproductive behavior (Alves et al., 2019; Palmer et al., 2017; Spain, Harms, & LeBreton, 2014; O'Boyle et al., 2012; Jonason, Slomski, & Partyka, 2012). The studies that related traits and well-being sought to understand emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction among German employees (Volmer, Koch, & Göritz, 2016), and autonomy, personal growth, positive relationships with others, purpose in life and self-acceptance among Polish collaborators (Aghababaei & Błachnio, 2015).

The present work is a distinctive study for its empirical application, with Brazilian employees, of the instrument by Paschoal and Tamayo (2008) which measures well-being at the workplace on the basis of positive, negative and fulfillment affects. The results provide opportunities for reflection on the actions of leaders with strong traits of the dark triad, which interfere with positive feelings and emotions, and impact employees' perspectives of professional fulfillment, and the necessary synergy and cooperation for organizational health. As Triberti, Durosini and Pravettoni (2021) demonstrated, individuals endowed with Dark Triad traits are insensitive to the negative emotions arising from the Covid-19 pandemic. With thousands of deaths, if the global health crisis does not affect people with Dark Triad traits, it is relevant to analyze the behavioral consequences of leaders with high levels of these traits in the work environment, given the direct impact on organizational productivity and the mental health of employees.

The findings also broaden the discussion on the theoretical and practical relevance of these themes for the work context, with a view to introducing to the Brazilian society ways of identifying, recognizing and coexisting with leaders and co-workers with strong personality traits of the Dark Triad in the work environment. The study does not aim, however, to change the behavior of these people, but to enable persons to deal with these individuals, protecting themselves emotionally, with the aim of inhibiting losses and preserving the well-being, health, and organizational performance. In this regard, it is important to remark that a healthy work environment promotes tranquility, enthusiasm, disposition, and generates benefits for employees, managers, shareholders and investors, amounting to an increase in productivity as well as to the improvement of human and financial-organizational performance.

Another point to be remarked about the relevance of this study lies in the fact that the empirical application allowed for the analysis of the employees' perception of their leaders' behaviors as well as their self-perception of well-being at the workplace. The profile of the traits measured in this study is the view of the employees which, although may differ from the self-perception of their leaders, is of crucial importance since it is the view of the former which mediates their relationships with the latter.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this section, the concepts, characteristics and the research instrument of the *Dark Triad* are presented. Next, the concepts, characteristics and the different scientific views of well-being at the workplace are introduced. Finally, the study presents previous works which discussed the theorization of issues around the *Dark Triad* at the workplace as well as the *Dark Triad* and well-being at work.

2.1 Traits of Dark Triad

The findings resulted from the application of a personality measurement instrument, currently called the Short Dark Triad (SD3) (Jones & Paulhus, 2014). The Dark Triad is a cluster of non-pathological personality traits, initially studied by Paulhus and Williams (2002) to verify the correlation and typical characteristics of Machiavellianism, Narcissism and Psychopathy. Although they have different features, the authors found that emotional coldness, duplicity, aggressiveness, and willingness to self-promotion are overlapping characteristics between the traits.

The instrument is composed of 27 assertions, with nine assertions being aimed at measuring each personality trait, and is organized using the Likert scale (1-totally disagree to 5 points-totally agree), in self-report format, with a view to observing the predisposition of individuals to externalize characteristics of these traits.

In a later study, Jonason and Webster (2010) developed an instrument called the Dirty Dozen (DD), consisting of 12 self-report assertions, measured by the Likert scale (1-totally disagree to 5 points-totally disagree), with four words for measuring each personality trait that makes up the dark triad. The application of the instrument in four studies evidenced the scale's consistency in measuring the Dark Triad's personality traits more concisely.

Gouveia et al. (2016) developed a study to analyze the validity and accuracy of the Dark Triad Dirty Dozen (DTDD) measurement. They tested it in two studies with Brazilian individuals; the first one with 207 participants and the second one with 300 population participants; the authors found that the instrument has acceptable psychometric parameters for the empirical application of scientific research. The authors translated the instrument into Portuguese, adapted and validated it as shown in figure 1.

Items	Traits
They exploit others for their own benefit	Machiavellianism
They deceive or lie to get what they want	Machiavellianism
They manipulate others to get what they want.	Machiavellianism
They flatter people to get what they want	Machiavellianism
They want others to admire them	Narcissism
They want attention from others	Narcissism
They seek prestige or status	Narcissism
They expect special favors from others	Narcissism
They are insensitive or indifferent	Psycho
They have lack of remorse	Psycho
They do not care about the morality of their actions	Psycho
They are cynical	Psycho

Figure 1 – Dark Triad Dirty Dozen Instrument (DTDD)

Source: Gouveia et al. (2016); Jonason and Webster (2010).

When analyzing the individual characteristics of each trait, we observed that Machiavellianism is a trait that displays a willingness to manipulate, lie, cynicism, opportunism, persuasion, use of strategies to achieve goals, lack of principles and focus on the future (Christie & Geis, 1970; Jones & Paulhus, 2014; Jonason & Webster, 2010). Individuals with the narcissistic trait have a disposition for vanity, a sense of grandiosity, exhibitionism, arrogance, self-sufficiency, authority, and sensitivity to criticism (Raskin & Hall, 1979; Jones & Paulhus, 2014; Jonason & Webster, 2010). The Psychopathy trait, on the other hand, exhibits the absence of guilt or remorse, impulsiveness, seeking emotions, and taking risks, while being oriented towards the present (Hare, 1985; Jones & Paulhus, 2014; Jonason & Webster, 2010). Insensitivity, dishonesty, manipulation, and lack of affability are characteristics of the three traits (Jones & Paulhus, 2014).

It is important to consider that the studies (Paulhus and Williams, 2002; Jones and Paulhus (2014) and Jonason and Webster, 2010) are directed to the subclinical analysis of the Dark Triad traits. They used the social psychology approach, which studies the behavior of these individuals, without the intention of showing diagnostic and clinical results, since the instruments used to measure these traits are self-report scales, which portray the individual's predisposition to certain attitudes that allude to the characteristics of the traits.

2.2 Well-being at workplace

Concerning well-being at work, empirical research has been directed to deepen two philosophical currents based on positive subjective states about the conceptions of happiness: Hedonism and Eudaimonism. The Hedonic view follows the line that the individual's well-being lies within the attainment of pleasure or happiness, obtained by the experiences of pleasure and displeasure that constitute a guide for judgment about the good and bad elements of life (Ryan & Deci, 2001).

On the other hand, Eudaimonism defends that true happiness is in the virtues – what is best within oneself, the best to be done, and excellence. In this view, happiness involves the distinction between momentary pleasures and pleasures that lead to human growth in the sense of self-fulfillment (Paschoal & Tamayo, 2008).

Concerning the research in the field of this study, Daniels (2000) asserts that well-being at work presupposes affectivity, resulting from the cumulative experience of positive affections in the work environment. In this conception, Van Horn et al. (2004) argue that well-being at work has five dimensions: affective (affection, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, emotional exhaustion), professional (aspiration, competence, autonomy), social (depersonalization, degree of social functioning), cognitive (cognitive tiredness) and psychosomatic (psychosomatic complaints).

In the view of Siqueira and Padovan (2008), well-being at work can be defined as: the integration between job satisfaction (positive emotional state resulting from work); engagement with work (performance transforms work into a positive experience); and affective organizational commitment (the employee's

positive relationship with organizational goals, which makes him or her want to remain linked to work) (Santos, 2013).

Gomide, Silvestrin and Oliveira (2015) argue that well-being at work, also called personal well-being in organizations, presents gratification and disgust as poles that encompass the satisfaction of needs and the fulfillment of individual desires in the performance of its organizational role.

According to Paschoal and Tamayo (2008, p. 16), the affective aspect (emotions and moods) is an essential element of well-being at work. They conceptualize it "(...) as the prevalence of positive emotions at work and perception of the individual that, in their work, expresses and develops their potentials/abilities and advances towards achieving their goals in life". The authors developed the well-being at work scale (EBET) based on the existing literature and the study by Albuquerque and Tróccoli (2004).

The scale consists of 30 items divided into three dimensions: (positive affect – nine items) (negative affect – twelve items) and the fulfilment at work dimension (nine items). The three dimensions address the affective (hedonic) and fulfilment/expression (eudaimonic) dimensions, supported by the belief that the work environment is a space for emotions and provides opportunities for the achievement and construction of happiness.

In this line of research, Sant'anna et al. (2012) investigated, among 157 workers from two private organizations, the relationship between well-being at work and managerial styles and organizational support for promotion and salaries. The results indicated that the themes were significantly associated, with corporate support being the most significant predictor of well-being at work. The authors emphasize that "the more positive the perception of support, the greater the positive affect and the worker's achievement, and the lesser the negative affect" (p. 745).

Couto and Paschoal (2012) investigated the impact of organizational activities aimed at workers' health - workplace gymnastics, music environment, relaxed environment, self-massage, and birthday celebration - on workplace well-being. The research sample consisted of 130 workers, including heads, from different organizations in the Federal District, Brazil. The authors realized that participation in activities aimed at workers' health inhibits negative affects at work.

In this vein, Agapito et al. (2015) investigated the well-being at work, the perceptions of career success and the intention to rotate of 500 individuals who work in the state of São Paulo, Brazil. The findings showed that well-being at work has a strong influence on the workers' intention of rotating. From this perspective, the greater the positive affect of workers concerning the work environment, the lower the propensity for evasion by employees.

Next, Paschoal, Álvaro, and Porto (2015) investigated the impact that opportunities to implement personal values at work have on well-being among 403 employees of a public institution in Brazil. The results showed the absence of significant interactions between opportunities to materialize personal values at work and the priority of personal values in predicting well-being at work. The authors emphasize that opportunities to enact values which express individual interests are enough to increase well-being at work.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, Vilarinho, Paschoal and Demo (2021) developed a study on well-being at work, in the context of work and professional performance of teleworkers from the Federal Data Processing Service (Serpro). The study compared these with workers who were not developing their work in the home-office model. The authors noticed positive points about productivity and improvement in the workers' quality of life, in contrast to negative issues, such as technical and social difficulties. Comparatively, teleworkers perceive better professional performance and well-being at work.

In the present study, the instrument developed by Paschoal and Tamayo (2008) was adopted to investigate well-being at work due to the breadth of concepts in the scientific current mostly used in the previous literature, and because it is in line with the context of the present scientific investigation.

2.3 Previous Studies

2.3.1 Dark Triad and workplace

The causes and consequences of dark personality traits and their implications in the organizational context caught the attention of Spain et al. (2014), especially concerning selection and training. The results signaled for managers some points that can be worked on through the implementation of development plans to minimize the individual's weaknesses, and mitigate the problems caused by the triad.

Palmer et al. (2017) investigated the relationship between the Dark Triad's personality traits and counterproductive behavior at work, such as sabotage, embezzlement, theft, with 208 US participants in employment. The authors observed that individuals with high scores on the triad characteristics reported involvement in some of the counterproductive behaviors, albeit with less intensity when they realized that the organization had more consistent monitoring to identify this type of behavior.

The Dark Triad was also the object of study in the work context in the investigation by O'Boyle et al. (2012), who developed a meta-analysis, by extracting data from six scientific research bases among other sources, of original reports published between 1951 and 2011. They observed that, in regard to the decrease of the quality of the performance at work, the Machiavellianism and Psychopathy traits were consistently associated. Counterproductive behavior was associated with the three constructs, despite being moderated by the authority and culture dimensions.

The characteristics of the Dark Triad were also identified in the work environment, in "toxic" employees or leaders who adopted rigid or light influence tactics of manipulation. Through an empirical study with 419 participants (35% male), aged between 18 and 61, Jonason, Slomski, and Partyka (2012) found evidence that men, more than women, adopt an aggressive or assertive style of interpersonal influence. The authors found that individuals with high Dark Triad personality traits assume a wide variety of tactics to influence others in the workplace, particularly men at the highest level who can disproportionately use rigid tactics.

In this same vein, Ying and Cohen (2018) conducted a study with 200 doctors from a children's hospital in China, whose objective was to examine the relationship between the Dark Triad Personality (DTP) and counterproductive organizational and individual work behaviors (CWBs). The results showed a strong relationship between the DTP and CWBs and that this relationship was affected by the mediators – particularly organizational commitment and organizational justice – except for those with high narcissistic scores.

In contrast, Alves et al. (2019) developed a study to verify the association of counterproductive behavior and Machiavellian attitudes. Questionnaires were applied to 137 Brazilian undergraduate accounting students. The results indicated a low counterproductive profile and an absence of a relationship between the themes under study.

One of the study's objectives by Volmer, Koch e Göritz. (2016) was to verify how the characteristics of the trait of the Dark Triad affect the well-being at work of 811 German employees, in the public and private sectors. The results showed that the narcissistic trait in the leaders did not cause adverse effects in the work environment, but the Machiavellian and Psychopathic traits had a harmful impact. Employees who perceived traits of Psychopathy and Machiavellianism in their leaders showed emotional exhaustion. Psychopathic traits in leaders led employees to not feel satisfaction at work.

Aghababaei and Błachnio (2015) investigated how Dark Triad traits differ between eudaimonic and hedonic well-being among Polish graduate students. The findings indicated that while Psychopathy was related to lower eudaimonic and hedonic well-being, Machiavellianism was generally not related to well-being outcomes. The results also suggest that the subclinical narcissistic personality helps one live well and fully function in life, and may even be helpful in the well-being of others.

Given the presented literature review, the following research hypotheses are listed:

H1: The stronger the Dark Triad personality traits in leaders, the lower the propensity for positive well-being at work.

H2: The stronger the Dark Triad personality traits in leaders, the higher the propensity for negative well-being at work.

H3: The stronger the Dark Triad personality traits in leaders, the lower the propensity for well-being as fulfilment at work.

H4: There is a difference between the levels of well-being dimensions and the Dark Triad personality traits.

Hypotheses H1, H2 and H3 were elaborated on the basis of the literature and the methodological procedure adopted by the seminal study by Paulhus and Williams (2002), who verified the strength among the three traits and the common characteristics within the triad, such as: emotional coldness, duplicity, aggressivity and disposition to self-promotion. From this perspective, the hypotheses assert that these characteristics in leaders generate a higher probability of negative rather than positive affects.

Hypothesis H4 was elaborated considering that, since the traits show different individual characteristics – above all, the Psychopathy trait, which is

deemed the most maleficent among the three traits (D'Souza, 2016) – it is important to verify differences in regard to well-being at the workplace.

It is important to consider that, although the Dark Triad traits share common and overlapping characteristics, the individual analysis of the traits is justified (O'Boyle et al., 2012) in the adoption of the statistical procedure.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Approach, Data Collection and Sample Procedure

The present investigation adopts the theoretical-empirical methodological approach. The survey is used as a data collection strategy, gathered via a Google form link, in order to measure the perception of employees about the Dark Triad personality traits in leaders and well-being at work. The variables of the investigated model, the measurement instrument and the research sources are presented in figure 2:

	Variable	Measurement instrument	Operationalization	Theoretical Basis
IV	<i>Dark Triad</i> (Machiavellianism, Narcissism and Psychopathy)	<i>Dirty Dozen</i> (DTDD) Traits measurement instrument	12 self-report assertives, with the likert type of scale (5 points, as follows: 1 – I totally disagree, 5 – I totally agree). These are 5-point ordinal scales, supposed as metric scales in the study (Hair et al, 2009). Calculating the mean for each trait, according to the procedure adopted by the seminal study by Paulhus and Williams (2002) and by later literatures in the area of business -Johnson et al (2013) and Murphy (2012).	Jonason & Webster (2010); Gouveia et al. (2016), translation and national adaptation
DV	Well-being at work	Well-being at work measurement instrument	30 assertives with the likert type of scale (1 – 5 points, as follows: 1- I totally disagree, 5 – I totally agree). These are 5-point ordinal scales, supposed as metric in the study (Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson, 2009). The scale has the following dimensions: 1) Positive Affect “My work has left me enthusiastic, happy, willing, peaceful, ...”, 2) Negative affect “My work has left me nervous, tense, angry, depressed...”, and 3) The fulfilment dimension, “I do my job according to my potential”, “I develop skills that I	Paschoal & Tamayo (2008)

			<p>consider important", "I get important rewards for myself...".</p> <p>Calculating the mean for each dimension: Positive well-being (BWP), Negative well-being (BWN) e well-being and a fulfilment (BWF). This procedure was adopted in accordance with the method utilized for the measurement of the <i>Dark Triad</i> traits.</p>	
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Figure 2 – Research variables, measurement instruments, and theoretical basis

Note: Independent Variable (IV); Dependent Variable (DV).

Source: Prepared by the authors

In short, the questionnaire consisted of the Informed Consent Form (FICF), Demographic Profile, Measurement of Dark Triad traits and Measurement of Well-being at work. For the measurement of the Dark Triad traits, the questionnaire requires the employees to indicate the extent to which they agree with their leaders' behaviors, which refer to the traits of the triad, such as: 'My leader explores the others to his/her own benefit'; 'He/she is insensitive or indifferent'. In regard to the well-being measurement, the employees expressed how they feel at the workplace, for instance: 'I feel enthusiastic'; 'I feel nervous'. Therefore, in the third phase, the employees evaluate their leaders' behavior and, in the fourth, they self-evaluate.

The Ethics Committee of the Psychology Institute of the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA) approved this research, with the number of the Certificate of Presentation for Ethical Appreciation (CAAE) being 34075420.0.0000.5686. The questionnaire was applied in July and August 2020, in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, with 268 Brazilian employees in the business area, including middle-level managers.

3.2.1 Statistical approach

As for the adopted statistical approach, the study presents descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) to get to know the profile of respondents, the average perception of employees regarding the Dark Triad traits in leaders and the average of the dimensions of BWP, BWN and BWF.

Then, it adopted Correlation and Regression as techniques which allow for the analysis of the relationship, sign, and strength between the variables Machiavellianism, Narcissism, Psychopathy, and BWP, BWN and BWF. We tested the model for homoscedasticity, autocorrelation of residuals and linearity of parameters to apply the Regression technique. Based on the law of large numbers (Wooldridge, 2002), the data curve tends to be a normal one, as the sample has more than 30 observations.

Finally, to make the results more robust, the Logistic Regression was applied to observe whether the positive variation of the Dark Triad's personality traits contributes to an increase in the probability of well-being at work. For this purpose, the BWP, BWN and BWF dependent variables were categorized into qualitative and binary, by cutting the mean into two ranges, considering the low level for

scores below the median and the high level for scores above the median (Well-being Low: 0 and Well-being High: 1). The Mann-Whitney Hypothesis Test was applied to verify whether there is a difference in the well-being dimensions in the presence of the personality traits, given the qualitative characterization of the dependent variable (Well-being) and the quantitative nature of the independent variable (average of the Dark Triad traits).

It is essential to consider that the reliability coefficient of the investigated model, measured by Cronbach's Alpha, was 0.778 for the Well-being variable, 0.937 for the personality traits variables, and 0.813 for all variables inserted together, which indicates the consistency of the model. It is also worth noting that the size of the sample is beyond the parameters required for the use of multivariate techniques ($n \geq$ to 5 times the number of variables in the model) as proposed by Hair et al. (2009).

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Initially, the respondents' profile is presented and, after that, the study introduces and discusses the descriptive results, of correlation between the variables and the test of hypotheses. Subsequently, the significance of the model is analyzed using multiple regression. Finally, to confirm and provide greater robustness to the results, the findings of logistic regression are discussed.

Among the 268 surveyed employees, 53.7% were male, 64.2% belonging to the 26 to 35 age group, of which 60% work in private companies in the accounting area (63.1%) and in the administrative area (13.4%). Most have 1, 2, 3 and 5 years of experience in the company (23.55%, 16.8%, 11.6%, and 6.7%), respectively, and the majority (71.6%) were in home-office activity, declaring that they were receiving adequate structure from the company (technological support) to act during the pandemic (36.6%). As for the level of education, 47.4% have a postgraduate degree. The sample was chosen in relation to accessibility and in a non-probabilistic manner, which does not allow for the generalization of the results, but for the observation of the phenomenon that refers to the object of the study.

In regard to the descriptive and correlational analysis, while examining table 3, it is observed that the fulfilment well-being dimension had the highest average among the three dimensions, followed by the positive and negative well-being dimensions. This result suggests that employees report a greater propensity for fulfilment at work, and positive affects rather than negative affects at work. When analyzing the statements with the highest frequency of agreement for well-being and fulfilment, "I perform my work according to my potential" (73.9%) and "I develop skills that I consider important" (78%) stand out. It is observed that the assertions highlight the employee's effort to develop potential, skills and competences to carry out the work.

Feeling "Proud" (57.2%) was also the statement with the highest level of agreement referring to positive well-being, suggesting that the employee is satisfied and admired with the work he or she is developing in the work environment. The assertions that refer to negative well-being, more frequently, were "Anxious" (49.6%) and "Concerned" (49.6%). This result draws attention, mainly because of the pandemic context in which the research was carried out, when it triggered several negative emotions, adaptation to new work patterns and

technologies, and insecurity about job maintenance in the face of sanitary, economic and political crises in the national context.

Concerning personality traits, Narcissism had the highest average, followed by Machiavellianism, and Psychopathy. Although the results show the perception of low agreement among collaborators for the Dark Triad traits, these results suggest a higher prevalence for leaders with higher disposition to seek attention, prestige, status, and admiration. The highest frequency of responses from employees to the following narcissistic assertion stands out: "You want others to admire you" (39.2%).

Table 1
Descriptive statistics and Pearson Correlation

	Mean	Standard deviation	1	2	3	4	5	6
1- Positive well-being	3,3657	1,04477	1					
2- Negative well-being	2,8755	1,04009	-,598(**)	1				
3- Fulfilment well-being	3,6727	,92272	,714(**)	-,316(**)	1			
4- Machiavellianism	2,1101	1,17500	-,318(**)	,314(**)	-,229(**)	1		
5- Narcissism	2,6847	1,23443	-,191(**)	,205(**)	-,129(**)	,636(**)	1	
6- Psychopathy	2,0065	1,11245	-,284(**)	,280(**)	-,220(**)	,713(**)	,583(**)	1

Note: 1 (**) $p < .01$

Source: Prepared by the authors, based on research data.

When analyzing the association between the variables, there is a pairwise correlation of the Dark Triad personality traits, with greater strength between Machiavellianism and Psychopathy ($r = .713$, $p < .01$), followed by Machiavellianism and Narcissism ($r = .636$, $p < .01$) and by Narcissism and Psychopathy ($r = .583$, $p < .01$). This finding suggests that the characteristics of Machiavellianism and Psychopathy are more tangent, and that collaborators perceive their leaders as more prone to self-esteem, self-promotion, and selfishness, which are attitudes common to both traits, according to D'Souza (2016) and D'Souza et al. (2019).

This result is supported by the study by Volmer et al. (2016), who found a more significant correlation between Machiavellianism and Psychopathy ($r = .76$, $p < .01$), followed by Machiavellianism and Narcissism ($r = .75$, $p < .01$) and Narcissism and Psychopathy ($r = .74$, $p < .01$), although the present study shows greater strength between the traits. The survey by Aghababaei and Błachnio (2015), on the other hand, converges with the result of a more significant association between Machiavellianism and Psychopathy, but diverges with this study in that they found a more significant association between Narcissism and Psychopathy ($r = .29$, $p < .01$), and lower and weaker association of Machiavellianism and Narcissism ($r = .16$, $p < .01$).

Regarding the association of traits and well-being dimension, there is a significant and negative correlation of Machiavellianism, Narcissism, and Psychopathy with BWP and BWF, and a significant positive association with BWN. These results suggest that employees, who perceive leaders with Dark Triad characteristics, promote a negative affect that leads to an environment of tension, nervousness, irritation, frustration and depression. These traits inhibit employees from feeling fulfilled at work, leading them to not overcome challenges, to not achieve the results they value, and to not feel rewarded for their

work. The studies support this result by Volmer, Koch and Göritz (2016), who realized that Machiavellian and Psychopathic leaders cause discomfort and damage in the work environment.

Table 2
Hypothesis test

Variables	Test	Machiavellian	Narcissism	Psycho
		Sig	Sig	Sig
Positive well-being	Mann-Whiney	,000(*)	,067	,001(*)
Negative well-being	Mann-Whiney	,001(*)	,008(*)	,002(*)
Fulfilment well-being	Mann-Whiney	,000(*)	,064	,000(*)

Note 1 (*) $p < .05$

Source: Prepared by the authors, based on research data.

According to table 2, it is possible to verify a difference between the three dimensions of well-being and the traits of Machiavellianism and Psychopathy. In the presence of Narcissism, only the BWN dimension differed. These results show that the personality traits of leaders influence well-being at work. Considering the level of significance of the variables, Narcissism is the trait that promotes the highest BWN ($\bar{x}=2.90$) and Machiavellianism the lowest BWP and BWF ($\bar{x}=2.40$ and $\bar{x}=2.41$, respectively). The results partially validate the H4 hypothesis.

To verify the significance of the statistical model, Table 3 presents the results of the Multiple Regression. From this perspective, variables that refer to the Dark Triad's personality traits and dimensions of well-being at work were included. In addition, the Age variable was inserted because it is potentially influential (Hambrick, 2007), and because it showed a significant association with the three measuring dimensions of well-being, being positive with BWP ($r=.178$, $p < .01$) and BWF ($r = .173$, $p < .01$) and negative with BWN ($r = -.203$, $p < .01$) as well as for having differentiated in the presence of BWP (sig = .000, $p < .05$), BWN (sig = .006, $p < .05$), BWF (sig = .001, $p < .05$), Machiavellianism (sig = .022, $p < .05$) and Psychopathy (sig = .029, $p < .05$), according to the Kruskal-Wallis hypothesis test. Based on the exposure presented, the Age variable was included in the Regression model.

Table 3
Multiple regression; Dark Triad traits and Positive Well-being

DV	Assumptions	Variables	Coefficients	Standard error	T statistic	Sig	VIF	
BWP	R ²	,1336	(Constant)	3,452	,245	14,099	,000	
	R ² adjusted	,1204	Machiavellianism	-,220	,079	-2,787	,006	2,395
	Statistics F	10,1435	Narcissism	,025	,065	,379	,705	1,796
	P-value (F)	,000	Psychopathy	-,107	,079	-1,354	,177	2,164
	Durbin-Watson Test	1,956	Age	,016	,006	2,731	,007	1,011
	White Test	,307847						

Note 1: DV: Dependent Variable; Positive Well-being (BWP)

Note 2: (**) $p < .01$

Source: Prepared by the authors, based on research data.

When analyzing the statistical model, including the BWP dimension as the dependent variable, it is observed, according to table 3, that the model is significant and negative for the Machiavellian trait but did not present significance for Narcissism and Psychopathy. In addition, the Age variable had a positive significance, which allows us to infer that the older the employee, the greater the

feeling of happiness, enthusiasm, and tranquility in the work environment. This result also suggests that the stronger the Machiavellian traits, the lower the positive well-being. From this perspective, leaders with Machiavellian traits inhibit positive affects at work, mainly because they exhibit low standards of ethics and honesty. This result is in line with the findings by Volmer, Koch and Göritz (2016), who observed that collaborators showed emotional exhaustion in the presence of Machiavellian leaders but disagreed on the trait of Psychopathy, which also showed emotional exhaustion.

Table 4

Multiple regression; Dark Triad traits and Negative Well-being

DV	Assumptions	Variables	Coefficients	Standard error	T statistic	Sig	VIF	
BWN	R ²	,1393	(Constant)	2,862	,243	11,780	,000	
	R ² adjusted	,1262	Machiavellianism	,203	,078	2,593	,010	2,395
	Statistics F	10,6428	Narcissism	,003	,065	,047	,962	1,796
	P-value (F)	,000	Psychopathy	,096	,079	1,222	,223	2,164
	Durbin-Watson Test	2,001	Age	-,019	,006	-3,220	,001	1,011
	White Test	,384157						

Note 1: DV: Dependent Variable; Negative Well-being (BWP)

Note 2: (**) p < ,01

Source: Prepared by the authors, based on research data.

When analyzing the significance and the sign of the model composed of the traits and the BWN, table 4 shows the significance of the model and the salience of the positive significance of Machiavellianism and the negative significance with the variable Age, allowing for the analysis that older employees feel less affected by the negative affect in the work environment. The traits of Narcissism and Psychopathy did not present significance to the model.

This result also allows for the inference that the stronger the Machiavellian trait, the higher the negative well-being. Leaders with Machiavellian characteristics use power to influence, convince, use strategies and manipulate employees to perform tasks that hurt values and cause tension, frustration, and anger. They may even incite counterproductive behavior, such as Palmer et al. (2017) evidenced with North American collaborators. Jonason, Slomski and Partyka (2012) (2012) also found that leaders with high personality traits in the Dark Triad have aggressive attitudes and exert a strong influence on the work environment, leading to counterproductive attitudes.

Table 5

Multiple regression, Dark Triad traits and Achievement Well-being

VD	Determinantes Pressupostos	Variáveis	Coefficientes	Erro padrão	Estatística t	Sig	VIF	
BER	R ²	,0854	(Constante)	3,595	,222	16,180	,000	
	R ² ajustado	,0715	Maquiavelismo	-,128	,072	-1,785	,075	2,395
	Estatística F	6,1407	Narcisismo	,030	,059	,503	,615	1,796
	P-valor (F)	,000	Psicopatia	-,098	,072	-1,358	,176	2,164
	Teste Durbin-Watson	2,017	Idade	,014	,005	2,649	,009	1,011
	Teste White	,298925						

Note 1: DV: Dependent Variable; Fulfilment Well-being (BWP)

Note 2: (**) p < ,01

Source: Prepared by the authors, based on research data.

When analyzed with the BWF, table 5 shows the significance of the model, the negative significance of Machiavellianism, and the positive significance of Age, allowing for the inference that older employees feel more professionally fulfilled in the work environment. In addition, this evidence indicates that the stronger the Machiavellian trait, the lower the well-being that refers to fulfilment at work. Triberti, Durosini and Pravettoni (2021) developed a study during the Covid-19 pandemic, through which they found that individuals with Machiavellian traits are negatively correlated with healthy behaviors and tend to continue living their own lives as if nothing were happening. The insensitivity of this trait and the others that make up the dark triad can have severe consequences in the work environment and for employees' health. Similar to other models, the traits of Psychopathy and Narcissism were not significant.

Table 6
Logistic Regression

	Variables	Expected signal	Found signal	B Coefficient	Exp(β) Coefficients	Wald's Test P-value
BWP	Machiavellianism	-	-	,570	,566	,002
	Narcissism	-	+	,166	1,181	,246
	Psychopathy	-	-	,109	,897	,537
	Constant	+/-	+	,745	2,106	,021
BWN	Machiavellianism	+	+	,348	1,416	,040
	Narcissism	+	+	,067	1,069	,622
	Psychopathy	+	+	,026	1,026	,876
	Constant	+/-	-	1,006	,366	,002
BWF	Machiavellianism	-	-	,479	,619	,007
	Narcissism	-	+	,207	1,230	,149
	Psychopathy	-	-	,234	,791	,176
	Constant	-	+	,911	2,487	,005

Note 1: Positive Well-being (BWP), Negative Well-being (BWN) and Fulfilment Well-being (BWF). Source: Prepared by the authors, based on research data.

To confirm the previous results regarding the influence of the Dark Triad traits of leaders on well-being at work, Logistic Regression was applied to give greater robustness to the model. The chi-square test showed that the coefficients together are statistically significant for the model under study – BWP (sig.= .000), BWN (sig.= .002), BWF (sig. = .000). This result provides an opportunity for the interpretation that the model can accurately predict the investigation.

Based on the Cox and Snell test, it is verified that 8.3%, 5.4% and 8.3% of the variations that occurred in the log of the odds ratio of the probability of occurrence are explained by the set of independent variables on the BWP, BWN and BWF, respectively. When analyzing the Nagelkerke R² test, it is possible to observe that the statistical model can explain 11.1%, 7.1%, and 11.1% of the variations recorded in the variable Well-being at work, based on the dimensions BWP, BWN and BWF, respectively. The -2LL likelihood had a value less than one, indicating the model's adequacy. According to Fávero et al. (2009), the smaller the -2LL or -2log likelihood, the better the adequacy of the model.

According to Gujarati and Porter (2011), when analyzing the significance of the parameters, it is important to examine the signal of the coefficients, given that the expected signals matter, as well as their practical and statistical relevance. In this vein, one can individually observe the negative significance of the Machiavellianism variable, which allows for the inference that it is a factor for the prediction of positive well-being and fulfilling well-being at work. The negative variation suggests that the higher the employees' perception of Machiavellian traits in their leaders, the lower the propensity of the workplace developing positive affects.

The results also demonstrate the positive significance of the Machiavellian trait in the presence of negative well-being. This result is in line with expectations, confirms the results of previous tests, and allows us to validate hypotheses H1, H2 and H3 for the Machiavellian trait. Although the narcissistic and psychopathic traits did not appear as significant parameters in the two applied regression techniques, they presented positive signs in the logistic regression for the BWN, as expected. The psychopathic trait also showed negative signs for BWP and BWF. Regarding hypothesis H4, it was validated for all three traits in the presence of BWN, and for the Machiavellian and psychopathic traits in the presence of BWP and BWF.

5 CONCLUSION

The study carried out with 268 Brazilian employees in the business area allowed us to analyze the personality traits of the dark triad in leaders and well-being at work. The results showed a higher perception of leaders with narcissistic traits and a greater sense of fulfilment at work. Positive, negative, and fulfilment affective dimensions were different in the presence of leaders with Machiavellian and psychopathic traits. Only the negative dimensions were different in the presence of the narcissistic trait.

The three traits were positively associated with negative emotions and moods in the work environment and negatively associated with positive affects and fulfilment at work, a result within expectations, given the dark attitudes of the triad. Machiavellianism stood out in the studied model compared to the other two traits. It showed positive significance with negative well-being and negative significance with positive well-being and fulfilment well-being at work. Furthermore, older employees exhibited a positive feeling about positive emotions, moods, and fulfilment in the work environment.

When analyzing the probability that leaders with Dark Triad traits affect well-being at work, we found that the stronger the Machiavellian traits of the leaders, the higher the propensity for negative affects and the lower the propensity for positive affects and fulfilment. Although narcissistic and psychopathic traits were not significant, we highlighted the positive sign for the negative affect, and the negative sign for the positive and fulfilment affects, meaning that there is a future chance of a behavior similar to that of the Machiavellian trait in the construction of a new study model.

These results respond to the research problem and allow for the attainment of the proposed objective, given that the perception of the collaborators reflects the influence of the Dark Triad's traits on the well-being of workers in the analyzed sample. The stronger the traits in leaders, the more likely employees will feel

anxious, tense, impatient, depressed, frustrated, angry, and worried, which projects an uneasiness in the work environment which can compromise productivity and performance. Positive and fulfilling emotions (such as happiness, enthusiasm, willingness, tranquility, having the feeling that you are doing what you like to do, overcoming challenges, and offering the best of your abilities) are mitigated when the environment has leaders with dark traits, impacting, above all, on the worker's health and the company's financial health.

These results also propose a more careful look at educational environments and leadership skills development programs to promote empathy, the search for altruism, and life-oriented values, which consider the appreciation of groups and the general well-being.

It is essential to consider that these findings are limited to the analyzed sample, without the pretension to being generalized and having a clinical content, given the behavioral connotation under analysis in light of the application of self-report scales for measuring traits and well-being at work. It is suggested for future research to moderate the variable organizational performance in the relationship between well-being dimension and the Dark Triad traits in order to verify whether the effect of moderation can result in a positive relationship between the triad and positive and fulfilment well-beings at work. Furthermore, a comparative study could be done in order to observe the results of the Brazilian companies as well as results in other countries which approached or touched upon the discussion of the analyzed issues.

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