RESEARCH ARTICLE

The role of Dark Triad on the link between Emotional Labor and Core Burnout

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Abstract

This study investigates whether the Dark Triad personality traits could be potential moderators of the relationship between the emotional labor and core burnout. The nonexperimental, cross-sectional study was based on a sample of 158 participants from different fields of activity. The results show that only narcissism (at medium and high scores) acts weakly as a moderator for the positive relation between emotional labor and burnout and, contrary to our hypothesis, it buffers the negative effects of emotional labor. These results can be explained in terms of Narcissism' conceptualization and are consistent with the newest proposed distinction form the literature between adaptive and maladaptive nature of this trait. Meanwhile the effects of the other moderators are insignificant. The results highlight both the importance of the emotional factor at work and the role of Dark Triad personality factors for core burnout.

Keywords

emotional labor, Dark Triad, narcissism, Machiavellianism, psychopathy, core burnout

Numerous theoretical frameworks such as Multidimensional Burnout Theory (Maslach & Jackson, 1981) or Holchschild's perspective (Hochschild, 1983) have outlined the relationship between emotional labor and the level of burnout. Although emotional exhaustion underlies the concept of burnout, the literature has rarely considered that the demands associated with emotional labor can be predictors of burnout (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002). Also, Grandey (2000) found that specific explanatory mechanisms have not been defined in terms of understanding the relationship between emotional labor and chronic stress outcomes, such as burnout. The author claims that previous studies did not describe briefly and concretely the concept of emotional labor, in this way there is an ambiguity about the nature of the concept's definition.

Based on this observation, this paper draws on the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Bakker & Demerouti, 2017) and analyzes the relationship between emotional labor and the burnout of employees in the workplace. Furthermore, although various factors have been proposed as moderators of the relationship between emotional labor and burnout, most of them were organizational,

ignoring the role of individual differences. As such, our second objective is to investigate the moderating effect of the narrow personality traits, namely the Dark Triad, in the relationship between emotional labor and burnout.

Burnout as a criterion – conceptualization

In the past, the workplace was considered to be a rational environment, while the emotional dimension was not taken into account (Grandey, 2000). Currently, the researchers in this field highlight the importance of the emotional factor in the workplace, and especially the effects that emotions and feelings have on the organizational outcomes, including the level of employees' burnout (Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011).

Burnout manifests itself as depression, feeling of failure, fatigue or lack of motivation, and is linked to negative consequences in both the organizational and personal life (Bakker, Van Der Zee, Lewig, & Dollard, 2006). Burnout is systematically related to physiological and affective manifestations. For example, exhausted employees may have difficulty in concentrating and making decisions and may report having memory and attention problems. Physically, they experience mostly sleep disorders and constant fatigue (McCormack & Cotter, 2013). Moreover, it seems that burnout is correlated with distress, physical exhaustion, insomnia, increased alcohol and/or drug consumption and marital or family problems (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Salvagioni et al., 2017). Burnout is also associated with changes in behavior, thinking, sentimental and health status. In connection with the social and professional activity, employees with a high level of burnout can distance themselves from the people they work with, reduce their involvement in social activities, spend less time on and invest less energy in their work. They may experience frustration, anger, guilt, disappointment and a lack of interest in the work they initially enjoyed.

As organizational consequences, other researchers have associated burnout with important outcomes such as poor

performance, turnover (Wright & Cropanzano, 1998), absenteeism (Salvagioni et al., 2017) and effects on the organizational climate through contagion (Verbeke, 1997).

Considering the multiple and diverse effects of burnout, distinct antecedents were examined. The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model is the most widely used theoretical framework for integrating variables related to burnout such as its antecedents and consequences (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). The antecedents of burnout are grouped into two categories, namely job demands (such as role conflict, workload, etc.) (Khedhaouria & Cucchi, 2019) and job resources (such as role clarity, social support, rewards, etc.) (Sabagh, Hall, & Saroyan, 2018; Bakker, Demerouti, & Verbeke, 2004). According to the JD-R model, job demands and job resources are defined as physical, psychological, social or organizational aspects in work context. Job demands require physical and psychological effort and may be a health impairment process that can lead to negative outcomes. Job resources stimulate personal development, reduce job demands and are helpful to achieve work goals (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). The presence of job demands and the absence of job resources are associated with a high level of burnout (Rattrie, Kittler, & Paul, 2019), while the presence of job resources is associated with work involvement and motivation (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Chen & Chen, 2012).

According to Maslach and Jackson's (1981) burnout is conceptualized as a tripartite stress syndrome, the three dimensions being represented by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, which appears in response to chronic stressors in the work context and leads to a lack of personal, and reduced professional achievement, the third dimension of burnout. The first dimension is emotional exhaustion, the most common symptom among employees. Prolonged stress and excessive demands on the workplace can result in developing emotional exhaustion (Leiter, Maslach, & Frame, 2015). Depersonalization is the second dimension, labeled by other authors as cynicism or a feeling of inefficiency. This refers to careless attitudes towards others (Fernet, Guay, & Senécal, 2004). Personal achievement is the

last dimension of burnout. This implies a negative self-evaluation and a negative, reduced perception of competence and performance (Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

The researchers' approaches were different in terms of burnout's conceptualization. Some authors used all three modified or extended components of burnout, while other researchers used only emotional exhaustion and depersonalization in their investigations. Also, many authors have resorted to a one-dimensional approach of burnout conceptualization, preserving only the emotional exhaustion, the basic component of burnout (Kristensen et al., 2005). The one-dimensional approach is extensively used in others researches (Bekker et al., 2005). The main arguments of using only the emotional exhaustion in this research are related to the inherent criticisms associated with the two other components. Depersonalization and lack of personal achievement were rather considered coping strategies than components of burnout.

Starting from these observations and taking into consideration previous investigations, the present study focuses on the core component, namely emotional exhaustion. Another reason why we chose this conceptualization is because previous studies show that emotional demands (the antecedent investigated) are more often related to emotional exhaustion than to depersonalization and personal achievement.

The relationship between emotional labor and core burnout-emotional exhaustion

The emotional effort invested by the employee in the work context is described in the scientific literature in terms of emotional labor, usually referring to physiological arousal (including heart rate, blood pressure, skin electrodermal reaction, respiration and the role of hormones), and in terms of the cognitive assessment of the situation that accompanies the experience of emotions and stress, in general (Grandey, 2000). Employees' effort to display certain emotions that may be at odds with their own emotional state describes the concept of emotional labor and is discussed and analyzed in several theoretical frameworks (Hochschild, 1983; Ashforth & Humphrey, 1996; Morris & Feldman, 1996).

In a professional context, emotional labor represents an effort to adapt the emotional manifestations to the professional framework according to the expectations of the role that the employee has in the workplace. Whether experienced authentically or not, employees involved in emotional labor are required to express a set of expected emotions in the workplace and to suppress those that might be an obstacle to achieving work performance (Hochschild, 1983). As such, emotions are a part of the employee's role in the workplace.

Studies claim that the occupational categories that frequently engage in emotional labor are more exposed to burnout. Doctors, social workers, teachers, police officers and firefighters, for instance, are more likely to develop high levels of stress, given that the nature of their work is highly emotional and the fact that they are constrained by the related surroundings to hide the reality of their emotions when interacting with other people (Dudau & Brunetto, 2020). Kinman, Wray and Strange (2011) show that the emotional labor expressed by teachers during the educational activities was associated with a low level of students' sympathy for teachers and also with a high level of teachers' cynicism towards students. Significant positive correlations were observed between emotional labor and both emotional exhaustion ($p = .44$) and depersonalization ($p = .44$), and a negative association with job satisfaction ($p = -.37$).

The constant display of positive emotionality that is not felt by the employee, leads to a depletion of personal resources due to strain in the workplace. It also compromises and impedes the establishment of social relationships with clients and other co-workers and leads to an extended experience of negative emotions (Totterdell & Holman, 2003). Given these inconveniences associated with the required effort to maintain a positive attitude at the workplace, emotional labor could be considered a possible job demand (Grandey, 2000) and a predictor of burnout (Bakker & Heuven, 2006; Bhowmick & Mulla, 2016; Yun, Lee, & Mastracci, 2019; Näring, Briët, & Brouwers, 2006). Thus, the

current study integrates emotional labor as a job demand, which could be associated with a high level of burnout. According to studies, burnout which compromise employees' well-being and performance, is a consequence of emotional labor (Yun, Lee, & Mastracci, 2019; Yin, Huang, & Chen, 2019).

Therefore, in addition to the mentioned observations, emotional labor, as a job demand, can contribute to the health impairment process that leads to negative outcomes, such as burnout, according to the JD-R model.

Considering emotional labor, a job demand, more specifically a hindrance job demand, because the literature claims that this category of demands affects health and hinders the optimal functioning, we can assume that it is related to burnout. Accordingly, based on these arguments from recent literature, the current study launches the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1. Emotional labor is positively related to employees' burnout.

The moderating effect of Dark Triad

Various contingencies have been explored in order to gain a better understanding of how the relationship between emotional labor and its outcomes, such as burnout or job satisfaction, is influenced (Cheung, Tang, & Tang, 2011; Kinman, Wray, & Strange, 2011). The literature on burnout has focused more on organizational factors which may influence emotional exhaustion feelings in a certain direction (Kinman, Wray, & Strange, 2011).

As these contingent factors can diminish or intensify the negative outcomes of emotional labor, identifying them is important for both theoretical and practical reasons. Next to the other organizational level factors proposed as moderators in the literature, the individual differences such as personality traits may also act as a contingency in this relationship. The current study contributes to the literature, by exploring the moderating role of Dark Triad personality factors that can buffer or exacerbate the effects of emotional labor on burnout.

Bono and Vey (2007) described how personality would affect individual differences that play a role in choosing the emotion self-regulation strategy. The latter can lead to a possible negative outcome such as stress. The authors proposed the Theory of Trait-Behavior Congruence, which foresees that people who engage in activities that are congruent with their personality, may experience less stress. According to the theory, personality traits can an important role in buffering or intensifying stress in the workplace. So far, the Big Five personality factors (emotional instability, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness) (Costa & McCrae, 2008) were investigated as potential moderators. Correlations were made between each dimension of the Big Five model and each component of burnout. Of the five factors, emotional instability is the strongest predictor of burnout, as it positively correlates with all three dimensions of the burnout syndrome. The other correlations between personality traits and burnout were moderate or weak and did not make a significant contribution to burnout (Swider & Zimmerman, 2010; Bakker, Van Der Zee, Lewig, & Dollard, 2006; Khedhaouria & Cucchi, 2019; Ebstrup, Eplov, Pisinger, & Jørgensen, 2011).

In contrast to the Big Five Model, the Dark Triad framework presents the negative aspects of human personality (Jonason & Middleton, 2015). While the literature examining the Dark Triad traits is abundant, few studies focus on the relationship between these traits and occupational health (Prusik & Szulawski, 2019). Current research provides compelling evidence for the association among the three components of the Dark Triad and burnout. High levels of narcissistic traits were positively associated with high levels of all dimensions of burnout (Schwarzkopf et al., 2016), and Machiavellianism and psychopathy were positively associated with emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (Johnson, Beehr, & O'Brien, 2015; Prusik & Szulawski, 2019). So far, Dark Triad facets have been analyzed only as antecedents of burnout, not as moderators (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). However, some arguments presented below can position Dark Triad factors as moderators.

Narcissism is associated with the feeling of grandiosity and superiority. People with a high level of narcissism have an egocentric lifestyle, a need for being admired and for strengthening

the ego from others, while overestimating their own abilities (Volmer, Koch, & Göritz, 2016; Jonason & Middleton, 2015). Narcissistic people can express feelings of anxiety and manifest divergences that arise from the lack of visibility in the social context. For this reason, narcissists make considerable efforts to make a good impression, which strengthens their self-esteem. From the desire to protect their self-esteem, they can display more socially acceptable emotions so as to obtain positive reactions or appreciations from those around them. Thus, they consume more resources by displaying strong emotional responses that are inconsistent with their mood, which can lead to exhaustion faster.

Hypothesis 2. Narcissism will moderate the relationship between emotional labor and burnout, in the sense that it will act as an exacerbator.

Defined as the manipulation and exploitation of others, Machiavellianism denotes pragmatic, misanthropic or even immoral beliefs (Jonason & Middleton, 2015). People with high levels of Machiavellianism pursue their goals such as power, status or competition (Rauthmann & Will, 2011), by using specific tactics such as deception, building alliances, adapting the situation on their behalf, lying, revenge or building reputation. . However, these tactics are not manifest. On the contrary, the employees with high levels of Machiavellianism display a lack of honesty or inconsistency between what they really feel and what they post. The lack of congruence between the felt emotions and those that are displayed can lead to burnout, consuming more resources.

Hypothesis 3. Machiavellianism will moderate the relationship between emotional labor and burnout, in the sense that it will act as an exacerbator.

Psychopathy includes characteristic elements such as high impulsivity, low empathy and fear, presenting a possible antisocial behavior. The lack of concern, guilt or regret for harming people around make up the profile of a person with high scores on psychopathy (Paulhus & Williams, 2002; Hare & Neumann, 2009). Every employee has the duty and responsibility to adapt to the norms and rules of the organization they are a part of, but people with a high level of psychopathy make a greater effort than the others, as they are more impulsive and have increased difficulty to adapt. Hence, the resources invested in impulse self-control can lead to burnout and a lower commitment at work (Prusik & Szulawski, 2019), psychopathy being in particular associated with a low level of awareness (Jonason & Middleton, 2015). Studies claim that neuroticism traits are reflected in psychopathy (Benning, Patrick, Hicks, Blonigen, & Krueger, 2003; Hicks, Markon, Patrick, Krueger, & Newman, 2004). Impulsivity, anxiety or anger, specific to neuroticism, were positively correlated with psychopathy (Ross, Lutz, & Bailley, 2004), being closely related to greater reactivity to stress and negative reactions to stressors in general too (Hicks et al., 2004). As well, the behavioral tendencies manifested by persons with high levels of psychopathy may contribute to increasing burnout (Johnson, Beehr, & O'Brien, 2015).

Hypothesis 4. Psychopathy will moderate the relationship between emotional labor and burnout, in the sense that it will act as an exacerbator.

Method

Research Design

This study is based on a non-experimental research model. The analyzed variables were emotional labor as an independent variable, burnout as a dependent variable and Dark Triad traits, considered moderating variables. This type of design follows the associations between variables and the way they influence each other in terms of intensity or buffer level, thus being suitable for studying the current research objectives. The research design was a cross-sectional one, where variables are investigated at a single moment, without controlling or manipulating the independent variable.

Procedure and participants

All the personal data of the participants were collected between November and December 2019, through a Google form addressed via an

on-line link only to people that had a job at the time of completing the questionnaire and who agreed with the processing of collected data for academic purpose. The participants were informed that they could withdraw from the research at any time and they were guaranteed the anonymity and confidentiality of the data they provided. The participants were given explicit instructions at the beginning of the questionnaire on how to go through each set of questions in the tool guide, as well as a brief description of the research carried out for academic purposes. In the first part of the form, the participants provided the requested demographic data, such as age, gender, last graduated studies, seniority at work and field of activity. The second part of the form requested the provision of information according to the research questions, with a total of 47 items and a completion time of approximately 7 minutes. In case there were any doubts or they wanted to withdraw from the study without any risk, an e-mail address was provided. No participant expressed a desire to withdraw from the research. All respondents were volunteers and did not receive incentives. The data provided by the participants were subsequently inserted into a database and statistically processed.

The target population of this study included the 158 (full-time or part-time) employees from private (36%) and public (64%) institutions from various sectors of activity (education, medicine, engineering, marketing, etc.) who work in Bucharest. Current research is based on a convenience sample. Of the 180 employees who were selected, 166 completed the on-line questionnaires sent through the access link. There is an overall response rate of 92%. Of the 166 questionnaires received, 8 were considered invalid (6 were incomplete and 2 were of low quality). After eliminating incomplete and low-quality questionnaires (for example, Z-form responses), a total of 158 questionnaires were considered usable. Of these 158 questionnaires, 52 were completed by men (32.5%) and 108 by women (67.5%), aged between 18 and 45 ($M = 25.2$; $SD = 7.54$). Of these, 9 people have post-university degree (5.6%), 66 have Bachelor's degree (41.3%) and 85 high school (53.1%). In terms of experience in the field of activity, 132 of the

respondents have the experience of 1-5 years or less (82.5%), 11 of 5-10 years (6.9%) and 17 of 5-10 years or more (10.6%). A post hoc power analysis revealed that for the subsequent statistical analyses, the statistical power of the present study is .91.

Instruments

Burnout. Employees' burnout was assessed using the 9-item "The Maslach Burnout Inventory – Core Burnout", developed by Schaufeli, Leiter, Maslach and Jackson (1996). Examples of items include: "I feel emotionally drained from my work.", "Working all day is really a strain for me.". Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from "Never" (1) to "Daily" (7). The Cronbach's Alpha for the scale was .91.

Emotional labor. Employees' emotional labor was measured using "Emotional Labor Scale (ELS)" (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002) which consists of 11 items. Examples of items include: "Express intense emotions.", "Display many different kinds of emotions.". Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from ",,strong disagreement" (1) to ",,strong agreement" (5). The Cronbach's Alpha for the scale was .83.

Dark Triad. Employee's personality traits were measured using "The Short Dark Triad (SD3)", developed by Jones and Paulhus (2014). The scale comprises three subscales, each containing 9 items. Examples of items include: Machiavellianism ("It's not wise to tell your secrets."; "I like to use clever manipulation to get my way."), narcissism ("People see me as a natural leader."; "I hate being the center of attention) and psychopathy ("I like to get revenge on authorities.", "Payback needs to be quick and nasty."). The Cronbach's Alpha for Machiavellianism scale was .84, for psychopathy was .75 and for narcissism was .64. In order to improve internal consistency (.78) for narcissism, 3 out of 9 items were deleted, as suggested by *If deleted items option* form SPSS. However, the deleted item decision was also based on the rationale of improving the theoretical structure of the scale. The current literature dedicated to narcissism's concept distinguishes between

adaptive and maladaptive narcissism. Maladaptive narcissism refers to a person's inflated self-view and a sense of exploitative entitlement, which is associated with high levels of manipulativeness, callousness and irresponsibility. At the same time, adaptive narcissism refers to a non-exploitative entitlement, described by, authority, positive work orientation and may reflect a stable sense of self-worth (Lessard, Greenberger, Chen, & Farruggia, 2011). According to a content analysis, 3 out of 9 items evaluate maladaptive narcissism and 5 items evaluate adaptive narcissism. Because 3 items were not enough to constitute a scale to represents maladaptive narcissism per se, we gave up on them. The 5-items solution, that evaluates adaptive narcissism, has been shown by factor analysis to be the most appropriate.

Results

Analytic Approach

We have followed the two-step model approach proposed by Kline (2010). First, we have tested the factorial validity of the instruments with confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) using the Jamovi Software (The Jamovi project, 2020). Then, we proceeded with testing the hypotheses, by doing a regression

analyses in order to test moderation, by using the PROCESS macro in SPSS (Hayes, 2012) with 5000 bootstrapped samples. We tested the moderation hypotheses based on the significance of the interaction term and we used the Johnson-Neyman technique (Hayes, 2012) to identify the values of the moderating variable for which the relationship between independent and dependent variables showed a significant association. Predictors were mean centered before being. To rule out alternative explanations (Carlson & Wu, 2012), gender (0 = male, 1 = female) and age (in years) and job tenure (in months) were included as control variables.

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics and the correlations between the study's variables.

To test the first hypothesis, emotional labor predicts core burnout (H1), we use a hierarchical linear regression. Multicollinearity between variables was low (Tolerance= 1.00; VIF = 1.00). Durbin-Watson tests for autocorrelation in residuals was also used. The obtained value was 2, indicates that there is no autocorrelation. It also met the assumption of non-zero variance. Results indicated that emotional labor predicts core burnout (ΔR^2 =.10, $F(1,158)$ = 19.12, p <.05).

Table 1. *Descriptive statistics and correlations for the variables in study*

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Gender	_	_	_							
Age	25.2	7.55	-.05							
Job Tenure (in months)	38.7	60.9	-0.8	.79***						
Core Burnout	26.7	13.01	.01	.08	-.03					
Emotional Labor	30.09	8.77	.04	.15	.18*	.32**				
Narcissism	14.49	5.56	.01	-23**	-.09	-02	.14			
Machiavellianism	27.1	8.21	-.12	.06	.08	.06	.37***	.29***		
Psychopathy	18.08	7.07	-.29***	-.00	.02	.08	.22**	.21**	.45***	_

Note. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001.

As controlled variables, based on previous literature we inserted gender, age and job tenure. In this case, gender is negatively associated with psychopathy ($r =$. -.29, $p<.01$; females have a lower tendency), age relates negatively with narcissism ($r =$. -23, $p<.01$; older people tend to have lower scores on narcissism), with negative emotionality ($r =$ -.10, $p<.01$; younger people have a higher tendency experiencing negative emotionality) and job tenure has a positive relationship with emotional labor ($r = .18$, $p<.05$).

As can be seen in Table 2, we found a significant effect of emotional labor and narcissism in predicting burnout ($\beta =.06$, $\Delta R^2 = .02$, $p < .001$). The predictive value for the whole model regarding the explained variance of burnout is 16%. The Johnson-Neyman technique allowed us to identify the values of narcissism specifying the regions of significance for the core burnout; these values range between 0.31 and 1.12 and corresponded to the centered value of neuroticism between −3.57 and 10.88. Accordingly, 78% of the moderating effect of narcissism on the relationship between emotional labor and core burnout is above $p<.05$ (see Table 4). Only higher level (b= 0.75, t[158] = 4.81, p < .001) and average (b = 0.51, t[158] = 4.38, p < .001) levels of narcissism exert an influence over the relation between emotional labor and core burnout (see Table 3). However, the negative correlation between narcissism and burnout indicate that high level of core burnout act as a buffer, not as an amplifier as we would expect (see Figure 1).

Table 2. *Summary of the regression results for the moderating effect of emotional labor and Dark Triad on Core Burnout*

	Narcissism	Machiavellianism	Psychopathy
Gender	.27	.24	.24
Age	.12	.14	.19
Job Tenure	-.03	-.03	-0.4
IV	.51***	.54***	.48***
M	-.37	-.07	.04
IV x M	.06**	-.01	.01
R^2	.16***	.13***	.14***
ΔR^2	.02*	.00	.01

Note. IV = Emotional Labor, M = Narcissism, Machiavellianism, Psychopathy. N=. 95CI = 95% Confidence Interval at Step 3, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.
Gender was coded: 0 = male; 1 = female.

Table 3. *Conditional effect of bullying on core burnout at values of the significative moderators (Narcissism)*

Moderator	N			
	Values	Effect	*SE*	*t*
Low	-4.29	0.27	.17	1.58
Average	0	0.51***	.12	4.38
High	4.29	0.75***	.16	4.81

Note. Values for moderators are the mean and plus/minus one SD from mean, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 4. *Moderator value(s) defining Johnson-Neyman significance regions*

| Narcissism	Effect	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
-9.12	.00	.28	.00	1.00	-.55	.55
-8.12	.05	.25	.22	.83	-.45	.56
-7.12	.11	.23	.48	.63	-.35	.57
-6.12	.17	.21	.80	.42	-.25	.58
-5.12	.22	.19	1.19	.24	-.15	.59
-4.12	.28	.17	1.67	.10	-.05	.61
-3.57	.31	.16	1.98	.05	.00	.62
-3.12	.33	.15	2.25	.03	.04	.63
-2.12	.39	.13	2.92	.00	.13	.65
-1.12	.45	.12	3.65	.00	.20	.69
-.12	.50	.12	4.31	.00	.27	.73
.88	.56	.12	4.79	.00	.33	.79
1.88	.61	.12	5.02	.00	.37	.86
2.88	.67	.13	5.02	.00	.41	.93
3.88	.73	.15	4.88	.00	.43	1.02
4.88	.78	.17	4.69	.00	.45	1.11
5.88	.84	.19	4.48	.00	.47	1.21
6.88	.89	.21	4.29	.00	.48	1.30
7.88	.95	.23	4.11	.00	.49	1.41
8.88	1.01	.25	3.95	.00	.50	1.51
9.88	1.06	.28	3.81	.00	.51	1.61
10.88	1.12	.30	3.69	.00	.52	1.72
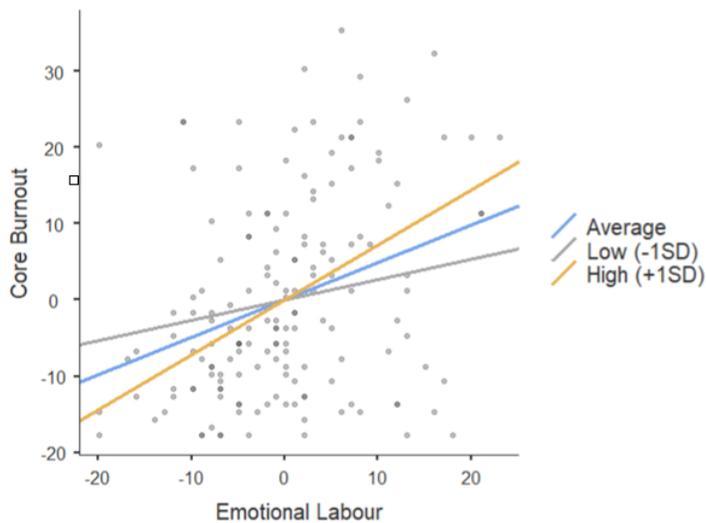
Figure 1. *Simple Slope Plot*

Results revealed that the interaction among emotional labor and Machiavellianism did not account for a significant proportion of the variance in core burnout (β = -0.1, $\varDelta R^2$ = .00, p >.05). In the case of psychopathy, the interaction term with emotional labor also did not account for a significant portion of the variance for core burnout (β = .01, $\varDelta R^2$ = .00, p >.05).

Discussions

The current study aimed to investigate whether and to what extend the emotional labor is associated with the employees' core burnout and to test whether Dark Triad (narcissism, Machiavellianism and psychopathy) moderates this relationship. The results showed that emotional labor is a significant predictor of burnout. Similar findings have been reported by other authors (Yun, Lee, & Mastracci, 2019; Zhang & Zhu, 2008).

These results could be explained based on the health impairment process proposed by the Job Demands-Resources model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Prior studies allocate employee' job demands to the category of elements strictly associated with the work tasks. However, job demands' classification includes various aspects associated with psychological (cognitive and emotional) effort (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). In this regard, our first contribution to the literature was to treat emotional labor as a demand, more specifically a hindrance job demand, because the literature claims that this category of demands hinders the optimal functioning of health (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

In essence, the emotional labor, as a (hindrance) job demand, hinders the optimal functioning of employee' health, as they become more likely to invest a higher level of energy at work. Therefore, they will experience much easier the inherent obstacles and will make a bigger effort to overcome them, and, as such, they will have a higher level of burnout. The findings provide empirical support for previous observations that emotional labor is an important aspect of stress that has potentially negative consequences for well-being (Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011).

By discovering a weak moderation relationship between emotional labor, core burnout and narcissism, the second hypothesis was supported. However, contrary to our expectations, narcissism acted as a buffer rather than as an exacerbator, and only at high and average scores. Low scores of narcissism do not bring any increment in the relationship between emotional labor and core burnout. Thus, higher level of narcissism leads to lower level of burnout under the condition of emotional labor. This result is only partially surprising and strictly based on the conceptualization of narcissism involving maladaptive and adaptive traits. This distinction is recently presented in the literature (Kanel, van Vianen, Her & Schmidt, 2017). Even if we did not adhere to this theoretical framework from the beginning, the fact that we had to revise the narcissism scale, leads to adaptive narcissism as assessments. Adaptative narcissism refers to stable sense of self-worth and authority. In support to the buffering hypothesis, narcissism might diminish the effect of emotional labor on burnout, leading to lower levels of employee' burnout. Narcissistic people have a positive image about themselves which is an important resource that may decrease the level of burnout (Kanel, van Vianen, Her & Schmidt, 2017). Hobfoll (1989) suggests that stress is defined as a reaction to environmental factors depicted by a risk of loss of resources, the actual loss of resources and the absence of resource gain following the investment of resources. Being associated with higher narcissism, high non-exploitive entitlement is related to a positive work orientation, authority and self-perceived initiative to motivate the employee. It suggests that people with high levels of non-exploitive entitlement, experience a robust feeling of self-worth, rather than a low self-esteem, feelings of self-doubt or anxiety. This would lead to less vulnerability to threatening events (Lessard et al.2011). Machiavellianism and psychopathy did not have a significant effect on the link between emotional labor and core burnout.

Theoretical and Practical implication

A series of theoretical and practical implications belong to the current study. Regarding the theoretical perspective, firstly, emotional labor and burnout have been examined, in accordance with the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model. Thus, emotional labor was established as a job demand, even if this concept is not directly based on the theoretical framework of the JD-R. On the other hand, examining the moderating role of personality traits can assist in exploring whether burnout is a social phenomenon or is more related to individual variability. Also, such studies help practitioners to identify which individuals are more exposed to the risk of burnout.

In terms of practical implications, this study reinforces the importance of the employee's emotional labor and the need for organizations to reconsider the job descriptions and employee 'performance appraisals and to include the emotional labor into. This aspect is required in order to present what kind of emotional tasks the job involves, and to assess how and whether employees manage their emotions in a healthy way. Another aspect that should be taken into consideration is training related. Although emotions are considered crucial in the workplace, most of the training programs are designed in order to consolidate hard skills, and less on the ensuring an adequate emotional regulation (Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011). For example, training programs could prevent employees from engaging in surface acting and promoting deep acting. One of the strategies is training employees in strategies to regulate healthier emotions and to create more opportunities to experience genuine positive emotions during work. Consequently, the employee' burnout may decrease. But, the first step is to identify the employee' pattern of personality who tend to engage in surface acting that may lead to burnout. The personality may have an impact on the individual differences that play a role in choosing the emotion self-regulation strategy that may lead to a possible negative outcome such as stress. People who engage in activities that are coincidental to their personality may experience less stress, according to Theory of Trait-Behavior Congruence (Bono & Vey, 2007).

Limitations and future research

The current research has a number of limitations that will be set forth below. A first limitation of the study is the cross-sectional design. A longitudinal design might be helpful also in order to track accurately the evolution of these variables which may lead to a specific disorder, as well as the comparison of contrasting groups in the analyzed characteristics.

The research was compiled on the basis of a convenience sampling. Thus, the results can be generalized to the reference population only with certain precautions. The sample consists mainly of students, with a medium educational level, who belong to a restricted geographical area which makes the general population' representativeness limited.

More than that, the questionnaires were applied in on-line form, which leads to a lack of control over some confounded variables referring to respondent's state at the time of completion the questionnaire (lack of attention, fatigue, noise etc.).

Considering the displayed limits, numerous future directions can be taken into consideration. All the analyzed variables can be deeply explored, at the level of subscales of the instruments, in order to produce a more thorough and complete interpretation of the phenomena, which can have numerous theoretical and practical implications. For example, the distinction between surface acting and deep acting should be analyzed for providing a clearer perspective of the concept (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002). Or, burnout should be measured at the level of all three components and make a difference on how different personality traits moderate the relationship between emotional labor and all burnout's components.

Conclusions

Consequently, the current research started from the two proposed objectives, under which emotional labor is a predictor for burnout and the Dark Triad personality traits

moderate the mentioned relationship. Based on the obvious results, the first objective is confirmed. This finding is consistent with previous studies and provides additional insights about employees' emotional labor and its potential long-term consequences. About Dark Triad, in the scientific literature, such an association has not been studied as a priority and the current study claims that only narcissism had a (weak) moderating effect on the relationship between emotional labor and burnout. The Job Demands-Resources model was used as a theoretical framework that analyzes the antecedents and consequences in occupational health's field, focusing on the relationships between the employee' well-being and the workplace's specificity.

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