



# Dark side correlates of job reliability and stress tolerance in two large samples



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## ABSTRACT

This study set out to examine how dark-side traits (derailers) are related to stress tolerance and job reliability. Over 8000 adult Britons from two separate assessment centres completed two validated questionnaires: the first measured the “dark-side” traits which can derail one's career (HDS: Hogan Development Survey) and the second two established, criterion-related, scales called the Occupational Scales (HPI: Hogan Personality Inventory): *Stress Tolerance* which is associated with the ability to handle pressure well and not be tense and anxious; *Job Reliability* which identifies people who are honest, dependable and responsive to supervision. Hierarchical regressions showed that some “dark-side” factors like Excitable and Cautious were related to both Occupational variables while being Leisurely, Bold, Mischievous and Colourful were powerful negative predictors of work reliability. The *Moving Against People* factor was the strongest predictor of Stress Tolerance and Reliability while the *Moving Away from People* factor was also a powerful predictor of Reliability. The results highlight “dark-side” traits (Excitable, Cautious, Mischievous, Imaginative) which were most related to two crucial features of successful management.

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## 1. Introduction

The extensive data on the relationship between “bright-side” personality traits and job success suggests that three of the Big Five factors (namely Conscientiousness, Extraversion and Neuroticism) are significantly and systematically related to a range of work related measures including productivity, emergent and effective leadership success and satisfaction (Furnham, 2017; Judge, Cable, Boudreau, & Bretz, 1995; Judge, Higgins, Thoresen, & Barrick, 1999; Judge, Piccolo, & Kosalka, 2009). There are far fewer studies on “dark-side” personality trait correlates of job success and failure, which is the focus of this paper (Furnham, Trickey, & Hyde, 2012).

This study examines “dark-side” trait correlates of two characteristics valued in all jobs, namely stress-tolerance and reliability. Organisations that list the competencies they look for, often include concepts like resilience (composed, calm under pressure, stress coping and tolerance) and integrity (reliability, honesty, good citizen behavior) (Furnham, Humphries, & Zheng, 2016; Hogan, 2007). There is now an extensive interest in the concept and measurement of resilience (Treglown & Furnham, 2017; Treglown, Palaiou, Zarola, & Furnham, 2017). It is about coping and “bouncing back” after significant, as well as minor, setbacks. Resilience is a prophylactic against failure: a way of adapting and

thriving, rather than ruminating or falling into depression and stress-related illnesses.

These two characteristics are seen as important for all jobs, though possibly more so at senior levels. It has been suggested that these two characteristics are related to two personality traits namely Neuroticism and Conscientiousness which have been consistently shown to be the most powerful “bright-side” trait predictors of job success across a wide range of occupations (Furnham, 2017; Judge et al., 1995, 1999).

## 2. Dark side trait factors

With the increasing interest in leadership and management failure (Dotlick & Cairo, 2003; Hogan, 2007) and the development of reliable instruments to measure the “dark-side” traits (Hogan, Hogan, & Warrenfeltz, 2007) there has been a growing literature of which dark-side variables might be predictable measures of worker derailment and failure across many senior level, jobs (De Haan & Kasozi, 2014).

There are also a number of recent studies that have looked at the paradox that dark-side factors are associated with leadership success as defined by such things as promotion rate and managerial level (Furnham, Crump & Ritchie, 2013; Kaiser, LeBreton, & Hogan, 2015). In this study we used the Hogan Development Survey (HDS) to measure the dark-side derailers. It assesses dysfunctional interpersonal behaviours which reflect distorted beliefs about others. These dispositions may over time become associated with a person's reputation and can impede job performance and career success. The HDS measures self-

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defeating expressions of normal personality that come and go depending on the context. The HDS uses the same taxonomic framework as earlier studies on the Personality Disorders.

Various relatively small-scale studies have used the HDS and have shown it to be a robust, reliable and valid instrument (De Fruyt et al., 2009; Furnham & Trickey, 2011; Furnham & Crump, 2005; Khoo & Burch, 2008; Rolland & De Fruyt, 2003). There are now well over two dozen papers looking at the relationship of dark-side variables to issues in the workplace (Furnham, 2015; Furnham et al., 2016).

Some studies have noted that dark-side factors are associated with leadership potential and success as defined by such things as promotion to managerial level (Gaddis & Foster, 2015; Harms & Spain, 2015; Kaiser et al., 2015). One showed that whilst high scores on the derailers seem associated with speed of promotion they are also associated with later leadership failure (Furnham, Crump, & Ritchie, 2013). Further, there is evidence that the pattern of dark-side traits is very different between job types and sectors (Furnham, Hyde, & Trickey, 2014a). Three studies with data from different countries show that dark-side factors can help “climb the greasy pole” of leadership within organisations (Gøtzsche-Astrup, Jakobsen, & Furnham, 2016; Palaïou & Furnham, 2014; Winsborough & Sambath, 2013).

Many researchers have pointed out the fact that with regard to many, but not all, dark-side factors, an “optimal” score (usually around 1 standard deviation above the mean) often leads to business success while a “maximal” score (often 2 standard deviations above the norm) can often lead to management problems (Furnham, 2015; Kaiser, Craig, Overfield, & Yarborough, 2011; Kaiser et al., 2015). In this sense, dark-side factors can be associated with both managerial and leadership success and failure. As a result of the curvilinear hypothesis some studies have used quadratic analyses but found little evidence of those effects, finding that the relationship was linear (Gøtzsche-Astrup et al., 2016).

Most studies have tended to show that the HDS scale has three clear higher order factors labelled *Moving Against People* (Bold, Mischievous, Colourful, Imaginative), *Moving Away from People* (Excitable, Cautious, Reserved, Skeptical, Leisurely) and *Moving Towards People* (Diligent, Dutiful) (Furnham et al., 2012; Furnham, Hyde & Trickey, 2013, 2014a, 2014b). This higher order classification often makes for a more parsimonious analysis of issues and data. Further, they match nicely the Cluster A (Odd and Eccentric), B (Dramatic, Emotional and Erratic) and C (Anxious and Fearful) classification of the personality disorders (Furnham et al., 2016).

### 2.1. Occupational potential measures

The criterion measures in this study are two of the six Occupational Scales derived from the Hogan Personality Inventory (Hogan & Hogan, 1997): Stress Tolerance and Reliability. They were chosen because they measure aspects of behavior relevant to all jobs: namely the ability to deal with stress effectively (i.e. low Neuroticism, high Adjustment) and being reliable, organized and hard-working (i.e. high Conscientiousness, Prudence). The former variables may be thought as occupational resilience and the latter Dependability and Responsibility.

The manual documents the derivation and psychometric properties of these two scales. The *Stress Tolerance Scale* has 25 items and was designed to identify persons who are stable and even tempered as opposed to tense, moody and unstable. The scale was shown to have good internal reliability ( $\alpha = 0.87$ ) and to correlate with selling success as measured by revenue ( $N = 67$ ,  $r = 0.65$ ). Over 30 studies have been published attesting to the scales' predictive validity (e.g. Muchinsky, 1993). The *Reliability Scale* has 18 items and was devised to identify people who are honest, dependable and responsive to supervision, not fault-finding and irresponsible. It has an internal reliability of 0.83 and the manual reports on validation studies based on performance and rating data across many different jobs including truck drivers, customer service representatives and rehabilitation therapists

(Hogan & Hogan, 1997). Numerous studies have validated the scale (Woolley & Hakstian, 1992).

### 2.2. Hypotheses

Based on previous findings and reviews on dark-side correlations of work success (Furnham, 2015) it was predicted that high scores on *all five Moving Away* from people (Cluster A) factors (H1) namely Excitement (H1a), Skeptical (H1b) Cautious (H1c) Reserved (H1d) and Leisurely (H1e) would be negatively related to *both* Stress Tolerance and Reliability. This hypothesis is based partly on the previous literature in this area (Furnham et al., 2012, 2016, Furnham, Crump and Ritchie, 2013, Furnham, Hyde and Trickey, 2013; Gaddis & Foster, 2015) as well as the data that suggests these dark-side factors are negatively associated with emotional stability and conscientiousness measured at both domain and facet level (Bastiaansen, Rossi, Schotte, & De Fruyt, 2011; Samuel & Widiger, 2008).

It was also predicted that all four *Moving Against* people (Cluster B) factors (H2) namely Mischievous (H2a), Bold (H2b), Colourful (H2c) and Imaginative (H2d) would be negatively related to Reliability. This is based on the extensive literature that suggests these dark-side traits are most strongly related to leadership derailment because of dishonesty, selfishness and the inability to form and maintain relationships (De Haan & Kasozi, 2014; Hogan, 2007). No hypotheses were formulated for the *Moving Towards* others (Cluster C) traits.

## 3. Method

### 3.1. Participants

Two studies with different samples were conducted with the same methodology. Group 1, there were 3502 participants: 2487 were male and 1015 were female. Their ages ranged from 22 to 66 years with a mean of 43.21 years ( $SD = 17.14$ ). Around 80% of them were at managerial level. They came from a range of different industries and over 90% of the participants were based in United Kingdom offices.

For Group 2, there were 4957 participants: 3128 were male and 1829 female. Their ages ranged from 22 to 65 yrs. with a mean of 37.59 years ( $SD = 3.58$ ). Over 90% of them were native white Britons and all were at managerial level in large organisations.

### 3.2. Measures

1. *Hogan Personality Inventory* (HPI; Hogan & Hogan, 1997) is a traditional personality measure which is composed of 206 true–false self-report items; it measures seven dimensions of normal personality based on reinterpretation of the FFM and is designed specifically for use with working adults. This measure also has six established criterion related scales called the occupational scales. This study primarily concerns two: The Stress Tolerance scale has 25 items with an alpha of 0.86 and the Job Reliability scale has 18 items with an alpha of 0.75.
2. *Hogan Development Survey* (HDS, Hogan & Hogan, 2009) is a non-clinical inventory including 168 items, designed to score for 11 scales, each grouping 14 true–false self-report items. These 11 scales measure common dysfunctional behaviors in the workplace that could impact negatively on a person's reputation, interpersonal relationships at work, and therefore derail careers. The scales are interpreted in terms of risk, with higher scores indicating an increased potential for work-related problems. These eleven scales/traits could also be grouped into three categories or higher order factors, which are, following Horney's (1950) three themes of “neurotic needs”: *Moving Away From People* (when one manages stress by avoiding contact with others), *Moving Against People* (when one manages stress by dominating others) and *Moving Towards People* (when one manages stress by building alliances with others).

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