Research Report

The Dark Side of Leadership

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ABOUT THE INSTITUTE

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ABSTRACT

The recent cases of high-level corruption and misconduct in the Singapore public service make it imperative that we identify the various negative traits that can derail leaders. For corrupt and other types of bad leaders can have a profound effect on employee morale and the overall health and performance of an organisation. The dysfunctional behaviours of bad leaders are often the product of the interplay between their personality traits, the situational context, and organisational influences - an interplay that creates the conditions for their hidden "dark sides" to surface. In the Singapore public service, potential leaders are fast-tracked and often rotated frequently at the early stages of their careers. The consequent lack of an incubation period to psychologically adjust to the additional power and responsibility thrust onto these leaders could cause potential "dark sides" in them to surface. Research also shows that the so-called Generation Y in Singapore have potential narcissistic personality traits - one of the derailers of leadership. This paper identifies some of the "dark sides" of leadership and discusses how organisations can support leaders in developing self-awareness and the capacity to temper their "dark sides".

KEYWORDS

Bad Leadership, Dysfunctional Leadership Behaviour, Leadership Development, Leader Accountability

DISCLAIMER

This case study is intended for class discussion only and not to illustrate effective or ineffective management.
GOOD AND BAD LEADERSHIP

There have been a number of high profile cases of employee misconduct that have involved government employees and corrupt practices. These cases have resulted in costs in organisational performance, damage to employee morale, loss of public money, loss of reputation and perhaps most importantly loss of trust by citizens. Based on the findings of a study examining public officers involved in cases of corruption Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean commented on the findings, saying, "Many cases were reported either by the public, or by officers in the public services... this suggests a strong culture in Singapore and the Public Service which rejects corruption." He did stress that "keeping the numbers low requires constant effort and vigilance". While the public service works to ensure that corrupt practices do not occur through governance and organisational culture, there are still individuals who make a conscious decision to engage in these practices. It is of particular concern when these inappropriate actions come from organisational leaders, as leadership failures can have a profound effect on the overall health and performance of an organisation.

Corrupt practices is one example of bad leadership, which happens to gain a lot of public attention, but there are many other forms of bad leadership that may not gain such notoriety but still have a detrimental impact on people and organisations. Kellerman (2004) highlighted two basic categories of bad leadership, ineffective and unethical, which she broke down into the seven most common types of bad leaders:

1. Incompetent - lacks the desire or capabilities to create positive change
2. Rigid - unwilling or unable to adapt to the new
3. Intemperate - lack of self-control
4. Callous - ignores the needs of others
5. Corrupt - places self-interest first, lies, cheats, steals
6. Insular - ignores the needs of those outside the group
7. Evil - commits psychological or physical harm to others.

Adrian Furnham (2010) broke down the categories into Sad, Bad and Mad leaders. Sad leadership represented ineffective and incompetent leadership; these are leaders who do not have the skills and abilities to fulfil the job. Bad leaders are destructive, despotic and toxic, and he suggested that these individuals lead in a manner that is evil, unethical or

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unjust. Finally, mad leaders are those who are anti-social or aberrant; individuals who are mentally unstable or psychologically maladjusted. Sad leaders are easy to spot; they lack the skills needed; perhaps are in the position due to bad appointment decisions. It is the bad and mad leaders who give more cause for concern; these are individuals who can cause substantial damage to the organisation and those around them.

While some forms of bad leadership involve a conscious decision to engage in inappropriate leader behaviour, leader failure often occurs because of the way they act or who they are, which they may not be consciously aware of. However, we have to be careful with where we point the finger of blame; Zimbardo (2007) highlighted that a bad system can create bad situations which elicit bad behaviour, even in good people. With the effect that bad leadership in the public service can have on performance and also subsequently on citizens, it is important for us to not only be vigilant for financial crimes, but also to the factors that can elicit dysfunctional behaviours and performance in leaders which in turn can result in leadership failure and negative outcomes for employees and the organisation.

**Excessive focus on the good**

Leaders can be amazing forces for good in an organisation, effecting productivity and efficiency but also impacting employee morale and satisfaction. A leader in an organisation can have a wide span of influence; their decisions can reverberate throughout the organisation. And because of the profound effect leaders can have on an organisation, much research has been sought to uncover the characteristics of a successful leader. However, there has been a tendency in the past to glorify leaders and making them the heroes of the organisation, while ignoring the harm they may have inflicted (Kellerman, 2004). While this happens to a lesser extent today, an excessive focus on the positive does a disservice to organisations, leaders and their followers. People want to have good leaders in their governments, organisations or communities; one way to increase the likelihood of good leadership is to not only study, understand and teach leadership but also to encourage people and organisations to explore the idea and impact of bad leadership and leaders.

“What is killing us is the illusion of control: that things can be predictable, consistent and forever under control. What is also killing us is that followers require their leaders to be in control, on top of things, and take the blame when things go wrong” (April et al, 2000, p.1)

**When leaders fail**

The demands, as well as the nature of these demands, placed on leaders are increasing (Dess and Picken, 2000). Leadership that only focuses on observing and ordering subordinates is no longer applicable or appropriate in many leadership situations, especially in the higher levels of leadership. Organisations now have to rely on their ability to rapidly adapt to ever changing external environments, and a leader’s duties include managing this continual change and delegation of responsibility to their followers while maintaining the overall organisational mission and direction. This is especially true within the context of the public service, as leaders are expected to operate in an ever complex environment that
requires them to address and solve their citizens' problems quickly, transparently and with cost effectiveness (Vogel and Masal, 2012). The scope of a leader's responsibilities is ever growing, with expectations on him to not only make decisions but to be accountable to the public as well. For many leaders, such abilities do not come naturally.

De Vries (1992) estimated that there was a 50 per cent failure rate amongst corporate executives in the United States over the previous 10 years, while Hogan (2007) estimated that the base rate for bad managers was between 65 per cent and 75 per cent. Hogan et al. (2009) estimated that a failed executive costs an organisation between $1 to $3 million. Leader failure can result in detrimental financial losses for an organisation and can also cost the organisation through the loss of social capital, disengagement of employees, lost business opportunities and in extreme situations destroy organisations and bring down governments. Research conducted within the Singapore Public Service has found that leadership is a key driver in employee engagement; bad leadership can, in turn, result in disengaged employees. When there is a 'rotten apple' in an organisation, it can spoil many other good apples. Kelloway et al. (2007) have argued that leadership style is one of the greatest potential stressors of organisational members, as abusive, passive and incompetent leaders can cause extreme stress in their followers. This stress can be caused not only by the high demands placed on staff members, but also from the lack of control accorded to them. Often when a staff member is affected by poor leadership there is virtually nothing they can do to defend themselves and they are forced to suffer in silence. Leaders are often the gatekeepers of organisational rewards and have a say in organisation membership, which therefore gives them considerable power. Research has also found that bad managers are often the cause of employee misbehaviours such as theft and absenteeism. Poor treatment can also result in employees who are resentful, disruptive and vengeful (Furnham, 2010).

Why leaders fail

With such a heavy cost to organisations, finding out how and why leaders fail has become an increasingly important question. Bentz (1985) studied executives who worked at the American department store Sears during the 1950s and 1960s to identify the root causes of manager derailment. He discovered that although these executives were smart, assertive and self-disciplined, they still 'derailed'. And from the interviews he conducted, Bentz uncovered a number of themes associated with leadership failure, such as playing politics, being dishonest, arrogant and over controlling. He concluded that in most cases the failed executive had a personality flaw that led this person to be unable to build or maintain a team. For the most part failure is related with having undesirable qualities rather than lacking desirable qualities (Hogan and Hogan, 2001). Furnham (2010) highlighted that incompetent leaders are easy to spot in an organisation; they are unlikely to progress through the organisation due to a lack of skill and abilities to fulfill the job requirements. So, if leaders have the desirable qualities of a leader why are they ending up as ineffective or unethical leaders?
ORIGINS OF DYSFUNCTIONAL LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOUR

Understanding what prompts a leader to perform dysfunctional, and ultimately self-defeating, behaviours is important if organisations want to address the issue of bad and dysfunctional leadership. Research has found that dysfunctional behaviours in leaders can be a product of personality, situation and organisational influences interacting to provide conditions that allow these behaviours to surface (Tett and Burnett, 2003; Tett and Guterman, 2000). Some of the contributing factors include:

- 'Dark' personality traits
- Past experiences
- Insecurity or over-confidence
- Unrestrained power
- Organisational culture
- Followers and subordinates

The bright and dark side of personality

The bright side of personality describes the parts of a person's personality that they display when they are on their best behaviour, when they are able to self-monitor and self-regulate their behaviour (Kaiser and Hogan, 2010). Furnham (2010) stated that a manager can be effective and competent under normal conditions. However, work pressure or unusual conditions can increase the likelihood that dysfunctional personality traits emerge and cause problems, as people are not able to self-regulate their personality all the time. Although most individuals are able to deal with the dysfunctional aspects of their personality most of the time, they may not be able to do so under great stress or pressure, thus increasing the probability of maladaptive behaviour patterns emerging (Nelson and Hogan, 2009). This 'dark side' can be seen as the dysfunctional extensions of bright side characteristics and they are associated with derailment (Kaiser and Hogan, 2010, p. 228).

A number of dysfunctional personality traits have been identified as being related to dysfunctional outcomes and leader derailment. Many writers in the area have proposed their own list of terms or dysfunctional traits using different terms to describe these traits. Paulhus and Williams (2002) identified the 'dark triad' which consists of three socially undesirable personality traits - Machiavellianism, Narcissism and Psychopathy - that have been found to be linked to negative personal and societal outcomes.

Narcissistic personalities are characterised by an excessive love for themselves, have a sense of entitlement, are attention seeking and display exploitative behaviour and feelings of superiority (Rosenthal and Pittinsky, 2006). Narcissists tend to view others as
inferior beings and believe that they are uniquely special and thus entitled to attention and praise. While narcissism has often been studied as an abnormal personality disorder, it has been highlighted that it can also be a normal aspect of personality (Lee and Ashton, 2005).

Machiavellianism is used to define manipulative and cunning personalities who use any means necessary to achieve one’s aims. The term derives from Niccolo Machiavelli who wrote the book *The Prince*, in which he advocates lying, manipulation and forceful persuading to gain political and social power. Leaders who are described as being Machiavellian are politically oriented, seek to have control over followers, use impression management tactics and are deceptive for self-benefit. These individuals tend to be cold, callous, insincere and manipulative (Jakobwitz and Egan, 2006).

(Subclinical) Psychopathy is a construct that includes a range of personality traits such as grandiosity, egocentricity, deceptiveness, lack of empathy or remorse, impulsivity, irresponsibility and a tendency to violate social norms (Hare and Neumann, 2008). Individuals who display high psychopathy are greatly impulsive, have low remorse and tend to be thrill seekers (Paulhus and Williams, 2002). They also tend to engage in anti-social behaviours (Hare, 1985).

Other researchers have also developed different dimensions to capture the 'dark side' of personality, each with their own merits, such as Hogan’s Hogan Development Survey (HDS). A description of these 11 personality profiles can be found in the appendix. What may be more important is the simple acknowledgement of the existence of the 'dark side' and the influence it may have on an individual's leadership abilities.

Personality traits, both positive and negative, can be thought of as a person’s disposition to act in a particular manner. In the case of these dark side personality traits, they can be seen as dysfunctional dispositions that reflect an individual's distorted view of himself, how others will treat him and the best way to achieve his own personal agenda. It is thought that these distorted dispositions have a root in an individual’s past, that certain experiences may have shaped the way this person reacts to situations later in life. Hogan and Hogan (1997) suggested that many of these dysfunctional traits have their roots in childhood experiences. For example, individuals who rate highly as 'Sceptical' on the HDS most likely grew up in an environment which was degrading, controlling or dishonest, thus creating in them an ingrained mistrust of others. Individuals who are sceptical expect to be mistreated and because of that will seek out evidence of this mistreatment. Another example of the development of dysfunctional traits can be seen through the incidence of narcissism in Singapore's 'Generation Y'. Generation Y-ers have been found to be associated with a desire for money and promotions, and being overconfident (Kuijster, 2009; Cennamo and Gardner, 2008; Twenge *et al.*, 2010). As highlighted in "Generations and Leadership", Goh and Hennessy (2011) highlighted that Generation Y-ers have grown up in smaller family units of increasing wealth and buying power, thus they have had more attention and resources
devoted to them by their parents. As a result, these individuals grew up with a sense of 'specialness' and entitlement ('they are the "golden child" of the family'), which has been found to lead to an increase of incidences of narcissistic personality traits (Twenge and Campbell, 2008). This sense of 'specialness' results in these individuals being led to believe that they deserve and are entitled to be given power and recognition. As a result, there could be an increasingly higher incidence of leaders with narcissistic personality traits. This is not necessarily detrimental as individuals with narcissistic personality traits tend to attract followers due to their confidence and visions (Maccoby, 2000). However, there is a risk that these individuals will climb the corporate ladder without a desire of aptitudes for the added responsibility of managing subordinates, which is often associated with promotions.

**The effects of power**

"Power tends to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men, even when they exercise influence and not authority..."

- Lord Acton (1887)

The idea that power corrupts has long been established with many anecdotal examples of politicians, leaders in the public service or CEOs of organisations succumbing to the temptation of corrupt practices, or simply engaging in self-serving behaviours that do not take collective interests into consideration. Leaders are expected to use their power and influence to serve the collective interest, so when they are found to engage in self-serving behaviour it can have disastrous consequences, such as decreased follower motivation and performance, loss of leader power and even organisational collapse (Rus, 2009). With such negative implications, it leaves the question: why do leaders engage in self-serving or inappropriate behaviours? In 1972, researcher David Kipnis posed the questions 'Does power corrupt?' to which the majority of his findings suggested that power did corrupt leaders. This perception creates a discouraging picture of the people who are meant to lead and look out for the collective interests of others. However, the link between power and corruption isn't as straightforward as people often think.

"Nearly all man can withstand adversity; if you want to test his character, give him power."

- Abraham Lincoln

Researchers, such as Galinsky and Keltner, have suggested that power does not inherently transform and corrupt leaders, but rather it psychologically frees individuals in power from normative constraints. Keltner et al. (2003) posits that power draws attention away from situational cues that might have constrained the individual, and instead focuses attention towards the individual's internal preferences thereby drawing the behaviour of the powerful more in line with his traits and attitudes, revealing the 'true' person. Those with less power have less access to materials and social resources; they are associated with increased attention to threats and punishments, subsequently their behaviour is constricted by the
contexts they are operating in. High power individuals are tied more heavily to their own perspective and have an impaired ability to consider other perspectives and to consider their interest. In addition, it was also stressed that the effect of power on an individual was also very dependent on the traits of the person himself. Studies have found that the personalities of high powered individuals are a better predictor of their attitudes and behaviours than the personalities of low power individuals (Anderson et al., 2001; Chen et al., 2001; Galinsky et al., 2008). The increased correspondence between traits and behaviours is due to power causing a reduction in the strength of situations that normally exerts pressure on people to conform to normative behaviours and attitudes (Galinsky et al., 2007). Anderson and Berdahl (2002) found that high power individuals reported that they expressed their true attitudes more than their low power counterparts. They believe that these findings illustrated that high power individuals' behaviours are more aligned with their internal states than the powerless.

These findings highlight that power doesn't corrupt. Rather, power unshackles individuals from the constraints that normally restrict people. Power may allow both the good and bad sides of leaders to emerge, as power allows these individuals to be themselves and this can have functional or dysfunctional consequences, depending on their personalities and attitudes. What could be an issue is the lack of perspective-taking and self-awareness which can make leaders unaware of when their actions are actually causing dysfunctional outcomes. The effect of power does help to explain why the high-potential employee who manages to climb the corporate ladder at high speed can often derail when he achieves high power positions. Some have suggested this is due to an overreliance on a particular strength or trait till it becomes dysfunctional. However, it could be that once in power they are not restricted by potential threats and punishments and this allows a once hidden dark side to fully emerge.

**Dysfunction arising from context**

While it would be easy to lay the blame at the feet of derailed leaders, we must avoid attributing the cause of all problems to the leader's ability, values and personality, as there are external factors that can create an environment in which the leader's dark side can flourish. Leaders may inherit a dysfunctional organisation, making functioning as a competent leader almost impossible. Some may work in organisations without checks and balances, thus giving them too much discretion and allowing their dark side traits to go unchecked. Organisational culture, procedures and governance can also play a role in fostering or discouraging the emergence of dark side traits.

Kaiser and Hogan (2010) also highlighted situations that could also affect the emergence of the dark side. They distinguished between 'strong situations' and 'weak situations'. Strong situations present unambiguous cues regarding appropriate behaviour; these strong cues reduce the variability in people's behaviours as they conform to social expectations. While in 'weak situations' the cues for action are ambiguous, allowing for increased opportunity for personality to influence behaviour. It is in these 'weak situations' that the dark side of an individual's personality is more likely to make an appearance (Kaiser and Hogan, 2007). In addition, it has been found that hierarchical relationships influence the emergence of dark
personality traits, as these are less likely to emerge in interactions with superiors as compared to with subordinates (Kaiser and Hogan, 2010).

It is likely that superiors would be blind to their subordinates' dark side traits, as they are more likely to be hidden from them. This could result in individuals being promoted without their supervisors being aware of their dysfunctional traits. These findings also suggest that the Singapore Public Service's strong emphasis on check and balances helps reduce dysfunctional behaviour as it holds individuals accountable for their behaviour. Appropriate behaviour for employees is spelt out in the Code of Conduct and this reduces ambiguity.

Followers

When discussing bad leadership, Padilla et al. (2007) used the analogy of fire to explain leader derailment; they expressed that a person can only light and maintain a fire with three components - fuel, heat and oxygen. Remove one of these components and there is no fire. The same can be said for derailing leaders, firstly, you need the leader with a disposition to dark side traits, next comes the environment that is conducive to toxic leaders and lastly comes the susceptible follower.

"We cede personal responsibility for our own fates. We lay the extra burden upon imperfect humans, who too often can't help but disappoint. We risk either blindly manacling ourselves to our toxic leaders or, by our neediness, pushing otherwise non-toxic leaders over the line into toxicity. We invite authoritarianism to visit as a temporary guest, who, once ensconced in the back bedroom, may be nearly impossible to evict."

(Lipman-Blumen, 2006, p.89)

An interdependent relationship exists between leaders and followers and the action of one can affect the outcome of the other. Kellerman (2004) suggested that followers can entice a leader to go astray. In situations of instability, whether it be organisational, economic or political instability, followers will look to a leader for reassurance and security, and to restore stability. In times of instability, leaders can enhance their powers by advocating radical changes to restore stability. Organisations may grant these leaders excessive powers to make quick decisions to rectify the situation. This is similar to troubled organisations that bring in a new CEO who makes fast changes in an organisation, such as firing underperforming employees or dismantling ineffective departments. These actions are accepted due to the desire for a solution and a return to stability. However, once extreme powers have been granted they are often never relinquished. These conditions can create an environment in which dark side traits are fostered, allowing bad leadership to occur (Padilla et al., 2007).

Followers who do not act against destructive or abusive leadership can fall into two groups (Kellerman, 2004): Bystanders who allow the bad leadership to occur without saying anything and Acolytes who join in the destruction of the organisation. This suggests that while some followers may suffer in silence at the hands of destructive leaders, others may be 'infected' by their leader's behaviour and spread destructive behaviours throughout the
organisation. In addition, ambitious individuals may feel that in order to get ahead they should behave in a similar manner as their supervisors, thus furthering the repercussions of dark side traits and creating an organisational culture that nurtures negative work behaviours.

Consequences of the dark side

The growing interest in the 'dark side' of leadership is due in part to the findings that the 'dark side' interferes with a leader's ability to build and maintain high performing teams, degrades leader performance and interferes with their 'bright side' strengths (Nelson and Hogan, 2009). As previously noted, leaders are under increasing amounts of pressure and stress to navigate their teams and organisations through transformation while maintaining the organisation's mission and direction. These increasing demands in unchartered landscapes can present novel and potentially stressful situations which could allow the leaders' dark side to emerge.

In addition, as noted earlier, being in a position of power can affect a leader's ability to consider other perspectives. This, coupled with an unconstrained personality, could result in him being unaware when his attitude and behaviour lead to dysfunctional outcomes to those around him. As subordinates in lower positions of power tend to be better perspective takers and are often more aware of the situation, as a means of protecting themselves from potential threats and punishments, they are likely to be aware of their supervisor's personality traits. A leader's subordinates who work with him over time and have repeated exposure to him will come to recognise this 'dark side', which can affect their perception of him and lead to an erosion of trust in this person's leadership capabilities (Hogan et al., 2010; Hogan and Hogan, 2001).

Studies of the 'dark side' of personality have found it to be associated with the potential for derailment, poor work performance and the performance of deviant behaviours (Furnham and Taylor, 2004; Hogan and Hogan, 2001; Moscoso and Saladgo, 2004). Kaiser et al. (2007) found that dark side personality traits can result in leaders making bad decisions, creating enemies in the organisation, alienating their co-workers and also undermining the morale of their teams. Hogan and Hogan (2001) found that individuals who scored highly in each of the dimensions in the Hogan Development Survey (HDS) were extremely self-centred and tended to serve their own needs before others. This disposition led to others not trusting these individuals.

The positive consequences of the dark side

While a number of studies have highlighted the negative effects various dark side traits can have, some researchers have pointed out that there are times that these dark side traits can have 'bright side' consequences. Hogan and Hogan (2001) and Khoo and Burch (2008) found that certain dysfunctional personality styles correlated with leadership and effective leadership behaviours.
“Many leaders dominating business today have... a narcissistic personality. That’s good news for companies that need passion and daring to break new ground... but can be dangerous for organisations.”


Narcissistic individuals are characterised by entitlement, self-absorption, self-serving behaviours and hostility. However, research has found that some traits of narcissism are associated with certain positive outcomes. It has found that individuals with Narcissistic personalities are more frequently nominated as leaders by groups (Brunell et al., 2008; Paulhus, 1998), are more likely to be perceived as leader-like in employment interviews (Schnure, 2010) and are found to be associated with leadership success (Bollaert and Petiti, 2010; Ouimet, 2010). The tendency of narcissists to be boastful, aggressive and have grandiose ideas often help them to climb the corporate ladder and rise through the ranks quickly (Hogan and Kaiser, 2005). However, rising to leadership positions does not predict success once they are in these roles. Narcissistic leaders are often eventually rejected by their team because of their arrogance, high-handedness and self-serving behaviours that are associated with their Narcissistic personality (Paulhus, 1998). Leary and Kowalski (1990) suggested that narcissist leaders, with the aim of reducing the likelihood of ego threatening conflict, will modify their interpersonal interactions to maintain the positive impressions others have of them. Therefore, narcissistic individuals will engage in impression management behaviours, creating a positive image which can help them into leadership roles. However, as the power literature points out, once that individual has reached a position of high power they may no longer feel the need to monitor their behaviour, which could result in the emergence of dysfunctional behaviours.

Machiavellianism is used to describe individuals who are manipulative or cunning, with a strong need for power. Managers who have a need for social power tend to be willing to invest in a variety of tactics to influence others, attending to the psychological preferences of their followers (Bass, 1990; Yukl, 2002). Judge et al. (2009) stated that "Machiavellian leaders are very strategic in their thinking, [and are] able to navigate power dynamics in complex business and governmental organisations" (p.871). In addition, they are often described as charismatic and willing to invest in their own social capital for the sake of achieving group goals. This, coupled with their desire to exert their influence over others, may be able to unify team members under their leadership. However, Brown and Trevino (2006) stated: "In contrast to ethical leaders, Machiavellian leaders are motivated to manipulate others in order to accomplish their own goals, they have little trust in people and, in turn, tend not to be trusted by others" (p. 604). It seems that in the long run Machiavellian traits would be associated with a lack of trust, which works in opposition to the goal of creating and maintaining a cohesive and well-functioning team.

In these examples, the dark side traits were, more often than not, initially beneficial to the individual. However, in the long run they had destructive consequences. Perhaps these traits, in a constrained form, were useful in the early stages of an individual's career but as the individual rose to a position of leadership or authority, these traits were now
unrestrained and had the potential to cause damage and dysfunction within the organisation.

While drawing attention to the dark side of leadership, it must also be remembered that the so-called 'bright side' can have detrimental outcomes for organisations when they are taken to the extreme. For example, individuals who are Conscientious tend to be disciplined, goal-oriented, diligent in their work and are attentive to details. This trait has also been found to be positively correlated with job performance (Barrick and Mount, 1991). However, individuals who are extremely conscientious have a propensity to be cautious and are therefore less willing to take risks or innovate. Situations of organisational transformation or unstable and chaotic situations in an organisation would prove to be highly stressful for such highly conscientious leaders (Judge et al., 2009). Hogan and Hogan (2001) suggested that highly conscientious leaders would be inclined to be resistant and less adaptable to change and avoidant of innovation which could result in failure to capitalise on business opportunities and poor performance.

"Most great leaders have extreme characteristics. They can, on occasion, be a great help and a great blessing. They can also be a curse because when leaders are under stress they can, in effect, be major derailers."

(Furnham, 2010)

These findings remind us that both 'bright side' and 'dark side' traits can have positive or negative effects on individuals and the organisation depending on the situation and the individual's levels of the various traits (Judge et al., 2009). These examples, however, are often illustrative of the fact that any personality trait taken to the extreme is likely to result in dysfunctional outcomes. Furnham (2010) highlighted that while extremely high or low scores are rare, they are a sign of inflexibility and may be indicative of a problem, even in so-called favourable traits. In addition, Miller et al. (2001) highlighted that any trait can be pathological if taken to extreme levels, for example, high self-esteem taken to the extreme can become narcissism.

**MANAGING THE DARK SIDE**

**Selection**

In the pursuit of reducing the emergence of the dark side in leaders, many organisations seem to forget that prevention is better than cure. Furnham (2010) suggests that the high incidence of leader failure is often based on poor selection and appointment errors. Past research has suggested that it is not an absence of skills or traits that causes leader failure but often the presence of undesirable qualities in leaders. Traditional selection procedures start with a list of necessary competencies and skills that are needed to perform the role and candidates are assessed for these requirements. However, in most selection procedures there is no list of traits that would not be appropriate for that role or the organisation. Very
few organisations have 'select out' procedures (Furnham, 2010). As a result, candidates who may have dark side traits can sail through the selection process and in some cases their dark side traits are actually beneficial in selection.

Organisations should look for warning signs before they hire the successful candidate. As some of these dark side traits may be associated with deception and impression management, it may be necessary to do more than just observing individuals in interviews. It has been noted that dark side personality traits are often accompanied by strong social skills, which are adept in keeping a candidate’s dark side hidden (Furnham, 2010; Kaiser et al., 2006). Also, candidates interviewing for a job will be more guarded; they will be more conscious of how they present themselves and adjust their behaviour accordingly. Organisations, when trying to fill executive positions, should perform their due diligence by looking into the candidate's past employment history and his moral and ethical standards (Padilla et al., 2007). This may involve contacting his previous boss, colleagues and subordinates to get a more reliable measure of the candidate’s personality and typical working behaviours.

We now have reliable and robust measures that are able to detect dark side traits associated with derailment. One such measure, the Hogan Development Survey (HDS), is designed to identify themes within a person’s personality that can undermine an individual’s ability and effectiveness in workplace settings. The HDS can be used by organisations in the selection of employees to highlight the 'dark side', coupled with a personality measure that identifies the 'bright side'. Thus, organisations will be able to identify not only an individual's everyday strengths and weaknesses, but also his traits that could cause derailment. This would allow organisations to select individuals who possess the competencies they are looking for, as well as filter out individuals possessing high levels of traits that may cause potential problems in the workplace. While some may argue about the additional costs entailed to ensure that inappropriate personality traits are filtered out, organisations need to consider the opportunity costs of hiring the wrong person for the job (Furnham, 2010), especially if these traits emerge once that individual has risen to a position of authority.

**Leadership development**

"The object of leadership may be stated as having a system whereby a leader recognises what is good for the good of the government, for the good of the nation, for the good of humanity, and recognises the qualities he has and what he can do within his own limitations. He cannot do, and should not attempt to do, the impossible, but he should not fail to attempt something that might be extremely difficult and may be possible."

- Admiral Arleigh Burke

Hogan (1994) warned that organisations should not confuse the ascent to the heights of an organisation as a reflection of managerial effectiveness; a number of individuals that rise to the top usually have a great talent for self-promotion while fewer executives will have a natural talent for leadership. As leaders progress in their career, it is necessary to provide timely developmental interventions that allow them to develop a healthy perspective of
leadership, a deep level of self-awareness of who they are as leaders, and how they can best exercise their leadership for positive impact. Nelson and Hogan (2009) have argued that leader development interventions should be tailored to the individual; awareness of a leader’s 'dark traits' will allow the programme to be delivered in a manner that addresses the leader's limitations and in a way that will be accepted by the leader. These interventions can ensure that leaders develop in a manner that prevents their dark side traits from overshadowing their productive traits and behaviours.

Leadership programmes should also focus on risks for derailment as well as the traditional focus on what is needed to be successful. In addition, it has been suggested that leadership programmes should emphasise on leaders embracing the moral responsibilities they face as leaders, appreciation and focus on others, and greater self-awareness (Goh and Hennessy, 2011). One of the first steps towards preventing the performance of counterproductive behaviours is for leaders to be self-aware. Increasing self-awareness in leaders is a crucial factor in leadership effectiveness, as many with dark side traits are associated with an inability or unwillingness to take a realistic look at oneself. A more realistic awareness of self would allow leaders to realise their strengths, limitations, and true capabilities, with an understanding of their impact on those who they are charged with leading (Maccoby, 2000).

In a similar vein, Ket de Vries (2006) suggested that executives ask themselves these three questions:

1. What habitual defenses (coping mechanisms) do I use to cope with stress and do they need changing?
2. How do I express and experience emotions and could I do this more appropriately?
3. How do I see myself and how honest and accurate is that perception?

Judge et al. (2009) found that Narcissist leaders were more likely to interpret information with a self-serving bias and thereby are likely to have an inaccurate view of self which is also common among other dark side traits. It has been also noted that leaders with 'dark side' traits are likely to be unwilling or unable to respond to criticism or feedback on their developmental needs (Robins and Paulhus, 2001). For example, research has found that Narcissists are extremely sensitive to criticism and tend to be poor listeners, hearing only what they want to hear and thus not learning easily from others (Maccoy, 2000). So for these leaders self-awareness is not simply a matter of introspection as their dark side traits distort their perceptions of themselves.

Hogan (2013) suggested the root of leaders' bad behaviour is that they are self-centred and are unable or unwilling to consider other perspectives because they are preoccupied by their own agenda. Hogan believed that there are two causes of self-centred behaviour: insecurity and arrogance. Insecure individuals lack confidence; they are constantly on alert to real or imaginary threats which can provoke an emotional response from them. On the other hand, leaders with too much confidence are likely to be arrogant. Hogan suggested that these leaders view others as objects to be exploited for their own objectives. So, when these leaders are presented with information that indicates a bad decision on their part, they are likely to ignore the information and just carry on regardless. Leadership development programmes could help leaders understand how overconfidence or feeling
under confident about one's leadership abilities can affect their abilities as a leader. As Hogan suggested, much of a leader's bad behaviour stems from arrogance or insecurity.

As leadership development programmes help leaders come to terms with their pride or insecurity they may face as a leader, it can also explain the role that power plays in their performance as a leader. Discussing the un-restraining effects of power on personality may enlighten leaders to their own behaviour and how it affects those around them. Power can induce myopia in leaders: it narrows their visions to a more introspective view rather than a wide view that takes in the perspectives, thoughts and feelings of their subordinates. Rus (2009) highlighted that for a leader to be effective they have to be able to motivate their followers and a key aspect to being able to motivate them is to be able to understand them and see the world from their perspective. She suggested that perspective taking could be viewed as a trainable ability; teaching leaders to direct their attention towards their subordinates' perspective could prompt them to act according to the collective interests rather than a self-serving focus that power can induce.

Leadership development programmes could discuss the idea of leaders as stewards of their organisations, that their performance is measured by what they do with the resources (which includes employees) and what they return to the next leader and future generations, and that they must place the long term best interest of a group ahead of personal goals. In addition, programmes should consider the creation of effective leadership beliefs. In new or ambiguous decision making, an individual will look to similar situations for information regarding the course of action to take (Parks et al., 2001). In the same vein, researchers when looking into leader resource allocation decisions found that in ambiguous situations, leaders will base their decisions on what other leaders have done or what they believe an effective leader would do. Research has also shown that leaders hold different schemas for effective and ineffective leadership (Lord et al., 1984). These schemas provide the individual with a standard of how they should act in given situations. The implication of this is that a leader’s effective leadership beliefs could be shaped by other leaders they encounter; this has potential positive and negative outcomes, depending on what they are exposed to. To ensure leaders have a more appropriate and positive effective leadership belief schema, leadership development programmes could help create these schemas for what effective leadership in the public service entails. This could involve exploring what being a leader in the public service means, on both an individual and collective level, building a leadership culture through a shared leadership philosophy that articulates the purpose of leadership and the values leaders should espouse. It could also explore what makes a morale and ethical leader, a leader that strives for excellence and a leader that has a desire to serve the citizens of Singapore. Developing effective leadership beliefs for leaders in the public service could help to ensure the integrity of leaders who can focus on the collective needs of their followers and the citizens they serve.

Coaching

Nelson and Hogan (2009) have suggested coaching as a means of addressing dark side traits in leaders. Effective coaching can be used to help leaders confront their dark side personality traits and the effects they have on others, allowing them to develop more effective strategies to manage these behaviours (Babiak and Hare, 2006). However,
Brookmire (2007) conceded that coaching was unlikely to turn dark traits into strengths but coaching can be used to limit the negative effects of the traits. Some researchers have questioned the efficacy of coaching in leaders with dark side personality traits. Coaches may be able to help a leader become more self-aware, provide means of managing their stress and help establish healthier behaviours. However, Furham (2010) pointed out that paradoxically those who need the help the most are often the ones that resist it the most. Leaders with problematic dark side traits are unlikely to accept negative feedback, unwilling to take responsibility of their actions, or learn from others' or their mistakes.

To avoid these issues with coaching leaders, Brookmire (2007) suggested that coaches begin with a 360-assessment to evaluate strengths and limitations. This could be followed up by an assessment of the individual’s bright and dark personality traits, which would help determine their coachability and allow the coach to design an intervention that mitigates the impact of their personality traits on the coaching relationship and also on their leadership abilities (Nelson and Hogan, 2009). Nelson and Hogan (2009) suggested three ways in which assessment of a leader's dark side will enhance the outcomes of coaching. Firstly, knowledge of the leader's 'dark side' will allow the coach to anticipate the leader's potential responses to coaching and allow them to plan accordingly. Secondly, it can also help improve the leader's self-awareness, as the assessment of their 'dark side' can help them make sense of any negative feedback from the 360-assessment or other negative feedback they have received in the past. Finally, they also suggested that being aware of a leader's 'dark side' can also allow the coach to choose specific targets for intervention and identify the strategies that will be most effective. Regardless of a coach's ability to minimise dark side traits, awareness of the coachee's 'dark side' is beneficial to the coaching process as it allows the coach to anticipate how the leader is likely to react to the coaching process.

**Leader accountability**

Without accountability, power can lead to inappropriate behaviour, foolish acts and even dangerous situations. In addition, it has been suggested that when the powerful are unaccountable and power is achieved without proper incubation, leadership will be prevented from emerging (Galinsky et al., 2008). Leader self-serving behaviours can be reduced if leaders are held accountable for their actions if their choices and actions are transparent to their subordinates; they are more likely to be motivated to maintain behaviours that support the objectives of the collective. Having organisational checks and balances can help counter the negative effects power can have on individuals. With accountability checks in place, leaders are pressured to be able to justify their decisions and consider the implications of their actions. It may also be advantageous to educate followers regarding appropriate behaviour in the organisation and encourage speaking out against toxic leadership. Organisation could develop stronger followers by promoting a culture of empowerment. Leaders, being aware that employees can speak out against inappropriate behaviour, will be more inclined to ensuring that their actions and decision makings are appropriate and justifiable. Howell and Avolio (1992) suggested that organisations could promote ethical and moral behaviour through their policies and visibly enforce these polices to deter unethical and destructive activities. Finally, organisations should avoid making hasty decisions in times of crisis and ensure that if they are intending to bring in a new leader to help restore stability, they should be vigilant in selecting the right individual.
Employee development

Good corporate governance that dictates the rights and responsibilities of organisational members and the rules and procedures for decision making can also limit the effect of dark side leaders or provide an environment where the dark side cannot manifest. While organisations are now allocating more resources into the recruitment process, once hired, the planning of the employee’s development is often forgotten. Furnham (2010) suggests that the individual, their boss and perhaps the Human Resource department, should all be involved in the creation of an individual’s development plan. This way there can be collaboration and consideration of the development needs of the individual and those of the organisation. This can also be used as an opportunity for setting up career pathing linked with the attainment of developmental objectives, competencies, and organisational values and attitudes to reach the next destination on the employee’s career path. The organisation and the individual need to consider which career plan is best. For example, should the employee switch from being a specialist to a generalist? In addition, ensuring that there is performance management in place will also aid in creating a work environment that minimises the likelihood of the dark side emerging. Having an organisational culture that encourages honest and regular discussion of employee performance, setting clear attainable targets, help and training to develop new skills and a fair reward system (Furnham, 2010) will help in promoting a healthy work environment that minimises work stress. Employee development can not only be used to help create an organisational culture that minimises and discourages the emergence of dysfunctional traits, it can also contribute towards managing the dark side of leadership and organisational culture beliefs in future organisational leaders.

THE DARK SIDE IN TODAY’S PUBLIC SERVICE

In the journey to protect organisations from bad leadership, it is important to remember what the organisational mission is; this is especially true within the public service. It has been suggested that due to the governance in place, derailment of leaders is less likely to occur within the public services (Kaiser et al., 2007). However, dark side personality traits are likely to still be present and this, coupled with leaders in positions of power, could have potentially detrimental effects. Therefore, the Singapore Public Service should remain vigilant to dark side personality traits. As we become more aware of these dark side traits, we might find that certain negative traits are more prevalent than originally thought. The dysfunctional outcomes of these personality traits can be minimised if young or future leaders learn how to manage their dark side traits, accept feedback from others and are able to see beyond their own needs and views (Maccoby, 2004).

Within the Singapore Public Service, a considerable proportion of the leaders are fast-tracked officers who have been identified as potential public service leaders. These individuals may not have the luxury of an incubation time where they can psychologically adjust to the additional power and responsibility that their new leadership position has bestowed upon them. In addition, these fast-tracked individuals may be posted to a number
of different organisations during their career; this could result in them not being in one position long enough to feel the repercussion of their decision makings. Also, employees working with destructive leaders may not think it worthwhile to bring up their grievances, especially if their superior is due to leave for another posting soon. Therefore, it may be necessary to ensure that these potential leaders be guided to being more self-aware of their bright and dark personality traits and how they can affect their effectiveness as a leader. A combination of leadership development programmes and on-boarding programmes to help leaders understand the demands of their work and the skills they need to be effective in these roles could help minimise the effects of any dark side traits they may have. This awareness of dark side traits could also be applied to the support and resources provided to leaders within the Singapore Public Service, so as to be able to guide them through their transition to their new roles and enable them to cope with stressful organisational challenges that they will invariably face.

CONCLUSION

Derailed leaders can be very costly to an organisation, not only in terms of financial losses but also to the organisation's social capital. The damage done by derailed leaders can be extremely hard to rectify, therefore making it imperative for organisations to better understand how derailment can occur and how they can protect themselves from it. From the findings of previous research, leadership failure is not simply a matter of a lack of the technical knowledge or strategic skills, but also a function of a leader's 'dark side' which can corrode whatever competencies and bright side traits they already possess (Nelson and Hogan, 2009). It has been found that managers who derail are just as technically skilled as those who do not. Rather, failure occurs when leaders lack the ability to build and maintain a team, and are unable to either make strategic transitions or follow through on them (Lombardo et al., 1998). Organisations must ensure that their selection techniques not only highlight candidates with the competencies and abilities they desire, but also be able to filter out those who possess undesirable 'dark side' traits that are unsuitable to their working environment. In conclusion, leader development programmes that take 'dark side' traits into consideration may help develop leaders who are self-aware of their bright and dark traits, resulting in these individuals being able to work effectively as they rise through the ranks of their organisations.
REFERENCES


Klimoski (Eds.), Research companion to the dysfunctional workplace: Management challenges and symptoms (pp. 332–355). Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing.


ANNEX

Table of Hogan Development Survey Scales:
Themes and Implications from HDS Manual (Hogan, 2009)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HDS Scale</th>
<th>Themes and Implications</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excitable</td>
<td>Moody hard to please, with intense but short-lived enthusiasm for people and projects. High scorers are sensitive to criticism, volatile, and unable to generate respect from subordinate due to frequent emotional displays.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sceptical</td>
<td>Cynical, distrustful, and quick to doubt others' true intentions. While acutely sensitive to organizational politics, high scorers are easily offended, argumentative and ready to retaliate for perceived mistreatment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cautious</td>
<td>Reluctant to take risks or initiative due to fear of failure or criticism. High scorers are good 'corporate citizens' but avoid innovation, offering opinions, taking controversial positions, or making decisions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reserved</td>
<td>Aloof, detached, uncommunicative, and disinterested in the feelings of others. High scorers work poorly in groups, are reluctant to give feedback, are insensitive to social cues, and often appear intimidating.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leisuredly</td>
<td>Independent, resistant to feedback, and quietly resentful or interruption or others' requests. High scorers can be pleasant but difficult to work with due to procrastination, stubbornness, and unwillingness to be part of a team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bold</td>
<td>Unusually self-confident, reluctant to admit shortcomings, and grandiose in expectations. High scorers feel entitled to special treatment, are reluctant to share credit, and can be demanding, opinionated, and self-absorbed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mischiefous</td>
<td>Charming and friendly, but impulsive, non-conforming, manipulative and exploitative. High scorers test limits, ignore commitments, take ill-advised risks, and resist accepting responsibility for mistakes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colourful</td>
<td>Expressive, dramatic, distractible, attention seeking, and disorganised. High scorers confuse activity with productivity, are unable to allow others to offer suggestions, and are intuitive rather than strategic in decision making.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imaginative</td>
<td>Creative, eccentric, impractical, and idiosyncratic in thoughts and ideas. High scorers avoid details, are easily bored, lack awareness of their impact on others, and often fail to see the practical limitations of their suggestions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diligent</td>
<td>Meticulous, perfectionist, critical and inflexible about rules and procedures. High scorers micromanage their staff, find it hard to delegate, and have difficulty setting meaningful priorities for themselves and their subordinates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutiful</td>
<td>Eager to please, reliant on others for guidance, and reluctant to take action independently. High scorers have difficulty making decisions on their own, may not stick up for subordinates, and promise more than they can deliver.</td>
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