Master Thesis

# DOES STRESS LEAD TO PSYCHOPATHY? –
## DISCOVERING CAUSES AND MECHANISMS OF DAILY PSYCHOPATHY IN THE WORKPLACE

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**Abstract**

While research on the consequences of toxic behaviors at work is slowly accumulating, less attention has been paid to the causes and mechanisms. Yet, it is extremely important to understand why toxic behaviors in an organization occur as the consequences are far-reaching. Not only the psychological well-being of employees is threatened but also the existence of a whole organization can be at stake. Therefore, the current diary study made a starting point for identifying a possible trigger of daily psychopathy in the workplace. Over a period of 10 consecutive working days, it was investigated if daily role stressors, in the form of role ambiguity and role conflict, trigger the expression of daily psychopathy in the workplace. The final sample consisted of 83 full-time employed, German speaking participants. Results were analyzed with a multilevel regression analysis and daily role conflict was identified as a significant predictor of daily psychopathy. Contrary to what was expected, ego depletion did not mediate this relationship. In addition, it was examined if the relationship between daily role stressors and daily psychopathy varied due to the employee's levels of trait psychopathy. However, results revealed that the level of trait psychopathy did not significantly interact with role stressors. Future research should try to investigate different boundary conditions to reduce role conflict in the workplace. To find ways that reduce the likelihood of becoming a toxic worker is extremely important for the well-being of employees and for the overall performance of a whole organization.

## 1. Introduction

After joining Enron Corporation, the economic genius (Zellner, 2002) and future CEO Jeff Skilling almost overnight "transformed [the organization] from a sleepy cash cow to the darling of the wall street." (Stewart, 2006, p.1). Since the 1990s, Enron raised its stock price by more than 300 % on its peak in August 2000 (Thomas, 2002). Yet, by the end of 2001 Enron filed for bankruptcy (Healy & Papelu, 2003). As a result of the bankruptcy, thousands of workers were laid off and lost their pension funds (Jickling, 2003). In 2006, Jeff Skilling was found guilty on 19 counts of conspiracy and fraud in response to the bankruptcy. The defense lawyers of Skilling pleaded for mental incapacity and named him a "sorry specimen of humanity" and "a psychopath." (Andersen, 2006). Langbert (2010) calls Skilling a corporate psychopath with an antisocial, manipulative personality who aimed to outsmart the management while others claim that he embodies various personality traits of the dark triad (e.g., Jonason, 2014).

The dark triad is defined by three prevailing personalities: Machiavellianism, narcissism and psychopathy. The latter two personalities can be seen as subclinical manifestations of their clinical constructs (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). Machiavellianism is characterized as a manipulative personality that is extremely willing to exploit and deceive others in order to reach own goals and success (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). The characteristics of subclinical narcissism are grandiosity, entitlement and egotism combined with a feeling of superiority (Spain, Harms & LeBreton, 2014). Also subclinical psychopaths can be described with characteristics as feelings of superiority and selfishness (Spain, et al., 2014). Furthermore, they are usually characterized by enduring antisocial behavior, impulsivity, risk seeking behaviors as well as by a lack of guilt, empathy and remorse (Hare, 1985).

Prior research already investigated positive and negative consequences of the dark triad (Jonason, Li & Teicher, 2010). Yet little effort was made to understand the causes for why people often treat one another so badly (Kowalski, 2001). Kowalski (2001) emphasizes that an understanding of the underlying causes and mechanisms of these "dark" behaviors is extremely important. Not only appropriate relational behavior rules are violated (Kowalski, 2001) but also the performance of a whole organization depends to a large extent on the behavior of its employees. Employees that damage an organizations' performance are often called toxic workers. A toxic worker is defined as "a worker that engages in behavior that is harmful to an organization, including either its property or people" (Housman & Minor, 2015, p.2). In addition to Kowalski (2001), also Housman and Minor (2015) call for research that discovers how an organization could reduce an employee's likelihood to become a toxic

worker. The current study makes a starting point in identifying and investigating one of the causes and mechanisms of dark personality expressions in the workplace. More specifically, as psychopathy is said to be the darkest of the three personality traits (Jiménez, 2015; Rauthmann, 2012) having the most detrimental effects on an organization's performance, the focus of the present study lies on the dark triad trait psychopathy in a corporate environment.

Both an individual's personality and work environment are known to be highly variable and dynamic (Fleeson, 2001; Kaplan & Norton, 2001). Earlier research investigated that situational factors cause the expression of personality states (Spielberger, 1972) and that individuals differ in their sensitivity and reactivity to such situational cues (Fleeson, 2001). The purpose of the current study is to investigate the dynamic relationship between situational triggers and psychopathic personality states on a daily basis. From previous research it is known that workplace stressors, such as role stressors, might induce counterproductive workplace behaviors in employees, as for example aggression, impulsivity or lying to making up poor work (e.g., Mills, Reiss & Dombeck, 2008; Fox, Spector & Miles, 2001). As these behaviors appear similar to psychopathic personality expressions, the current research assumes that role stressors can induce daily psychopathic personality expressions as well. Moreover, earlier studies investigated already that job demands such as role stressors deplete an individuals' resources (Lee & Ashforth, 1996) which might lead to decreased self-control of own behaviors and actions (Neves & Champion, 2015) and unethical behavior (Gino, Schweitzer, Mead & Ariely, 2011). Therefore, this study investigates if ego depletion can explain the role stressor-state psychopathy relationship. To address not only within-individual differences from day to day but also between-individual differences, it will be examined if the level of trait psychopathy moderates the role stressor-state psychopathy relationship.

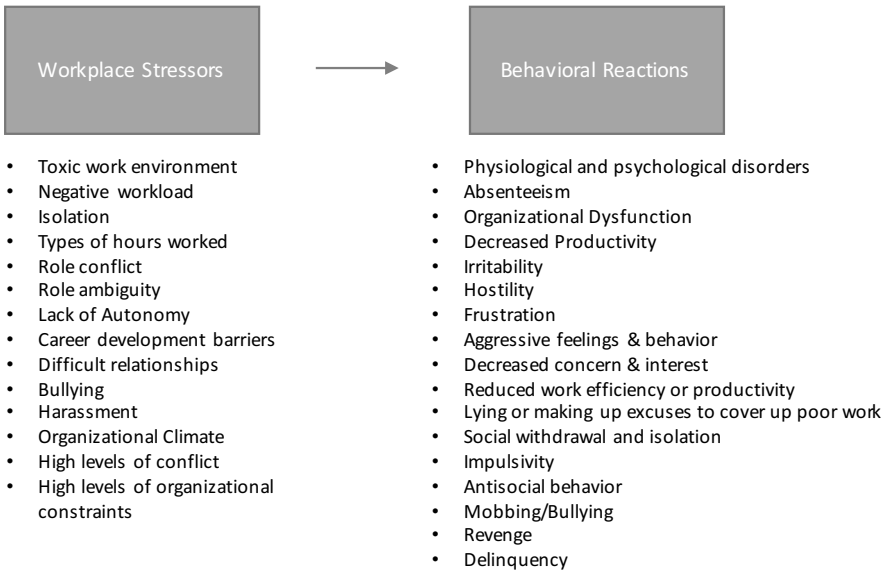
In sum, the aim of the current research is threefold. Firstly, it makes a starting point in investigating a possible trigger of state psychopathy in the workplace. Secondly, it differentiates between personality traits and states and therefore accounts for a) daily fluctuations in both role stressors and psychopathic personality expressions and b) for differences in trait psychopathy between persons. Lastly, boundary conditions to reduce an employee's likelihood to become a toxic worker are discussed and both theoretical and practical implications are derived.

## 2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

### *2.1.Stress and Psychopathy*

Psychopathy can be defined as "a mental disorder roughly equivalent to antisocial personality disorder, but with emphasis on affective and interpersonal traits such as superficial charm, pathological lying, egocentricity, lack of remorse, and callousness […]." (Colman, 2015, p.618). Traditionally, psychopathy is known from criminal or psychiatric settings and psychopaths are not expected to reside in the general population or to work in positions such as corporate leaders, for example (LeBreton, Binning & Adorno, 2006). However, psychological literature investigated that especially leading and highly responsible positions, such as CEOs, lawyers or surgeons, are often pursued and held by psychopaths (Barker, 2012). These so-called subclinical or successful psychopaths can be found in the general population (base rates range from 5 percent to 15 percent) and differ from their clinical counterparts in the degree, magnitude and/or frequency of certain behaviors and cognitions (LeBreton et al., 2006). Subclinical psychopaths show the same patterns of dysfunctional behaviors, affects and cognitions albeit in weakened form. In detail, the profile of a subclinical psychopath entails toxic personality characteristics, delinquent and antisocial behaviors, dysfunctional interpersonal relationships (e.g. conning and manipulative interpersonal styles) and atypical patterns of cognition (e.g. elevated self-perceptions and degraded perceptions of others) (LeBreton et al., 2006). Besides a lack of concern for others as well as impulsive and irresponsible behaviors, subclinical psychopaths' tend to cheat and lie to their own ends. Furthermore, frustrated and even aggressive behaviors are typical, especially if they are hindered in achieving their personal goals (LeBreton et al., 2006; Arbuckle & Cunningham, 2012). Although subclinical psychopaths have various emotional and behavioral deficits, research on the malleability suggests that these deficits are not fixed (Arbuckle & Cunningham, 2012). Thus, a (subclinical) psychopath might behave differently on different occasions and might not express psychopathic behavior on a daily basis. To account for this possible variability in psychopathic behavior (Arbuckle & Cunningham, 2012), the current research differentiates between so-called personality traits and states (Fleeson & Gallagher, 2009). A personality state lasts for a shorter time period but has the same affective, behavioral, and cognitive content as its analogous personality trait. Thus, the content of a psychopathic personality trait could be completely referred to a psychopathic personality state which expresses these contents for a short time period (Fleeson & Gallagher, 2009).

Assuming that psychopathy is not just a stable personality trait but also subject to changes and fluctuations of external life events, triggers of psychopathic behaviors in the workplace need to be analyzed. It has to be investigated why ordinary people express subclinical psychopathy on one day but not on another. This is extremely important as the consequences of psychopathic behaviors can be devastating on the individual, team and organizational level. Psychopathic behavior can lead to workplace bullying, lower co-worker well-being, no corporate social responsibility and even to corporate failure (Boddy, 2006). Yet there is little research on the explicit triggers of state or daily psychopathy in the workplace so far. Nevertheless, previous research has already examined factors and circumstances in the work environment that trigger adverse workplace behaviors in ordinary people (Muafi, 2011). Evidence from this research identified workplace stressors as a trigger of detrimental workplace behaviors (e.g., Fox, et al., 2001). Examples of these detrimental behavioral reactions included lying or making up excuses to cover up poor work and various forms of antisocial behaviors such as hostility, impulsivity, aggression or revenge (e.g., Mills, et al., 2008; Colligan & Higgins, 2005; Fox, et al., 2001). These and other behavioral consequences of workplace stressors that were identified by previous research are summarized in Figure 1 to present them in a more visual way.




(Childs & Stoeber, 2012; Mills, et al., 2008; Colligan & Higgins, 2005; Fox, et al., 2001)

Figure 1. Summary of previous research findings showing workplace stressors as a trigger of adverse behavioral reactions.

Findings from previous research have shown that especially one type of workplace stressors, namely role stressors, poses a significant threat to organizations and its employees

(Childs & Stoeber, 2012; Colligan & Higgins, 2005; O'Driscoll & Beehr, 1994; Fox, et al., 2001). Since role stressors were already shown to induce counterproductive behaviors in organizations (Rodell & Judge, 2009), the current study focuses on two of them: role conflict and role ambiguity. By definition role conflict "occurs when employees are required to perform two or more incompatible behaviors" (Childs & Stoeber, 2012, p.3). This lack of agreement between received roles is expected to produce an uncomfortable overall attitude toward the job as it reduces an employees perceived effectiveness in a given work unit (Schaubroeck, Cotton & Jennings, 1989). In contrast, role ambiguity is defined to occur "when employees are unclear as to what behaviors they are required to perform" (Childs & Stoeber, 2012, p.3). Thus, role ambiguity is concerned with the unpredictability about the consequences of role performance as well as with the information deficiency regarding expected role behaviors (O'Driscoll & Beehr, 1994).

Both role conflict and role ambiguity are examples of hindrance stressors (Rodell & Judge, 2009). They hinder an employee's ability to perform tasks successfully and to achieve valued goals. Ordinary people were shown react to this hindrance with anger, irritability, hostility, lying or revenge because they perceive them as a threat to their own success (Rodell & Judge, 2009; Colligan & Higgins, 2005). These already investigated behavioral reactions due to workplace stressors in general and role stressors in specific appear similar to psychopathic personality expressions. Figure 2 contrasts these behavioral reactions with characteristics of (subclinical) psychopathy visually. From previous research it is known that subclinical psychopaths lack impulse control and have a low tolerance for frustration (Noser, Zeigler-Hill & Besser, 2014). As soon as they face role stressors, their tolerance limit is assumed to be reached because the experience of role stressors threatens the achievement of personal goals and success (LeBreton et al., 2006; Arbuckle & Cunningham, 2012). As a consequence, psychopathic behaviors such as hostility, irritability or aggressiveness are assumed to be triggered. Consequently, this study assumes that role ambiguity and role conflict trigger psychopathic behaviors in ordinary people. It is expected that the more role stress an employee experiences on a specific day, the higher gets the obstacle of performing tasks successfully and achieving predetermined and valued goals. As a response, the employee is assumed to show even more psychopathic personality expressions. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

***H1: Daily role stressors a) role conflict and b) role ambiguity are positively related to the expression of daily psychopathy.***

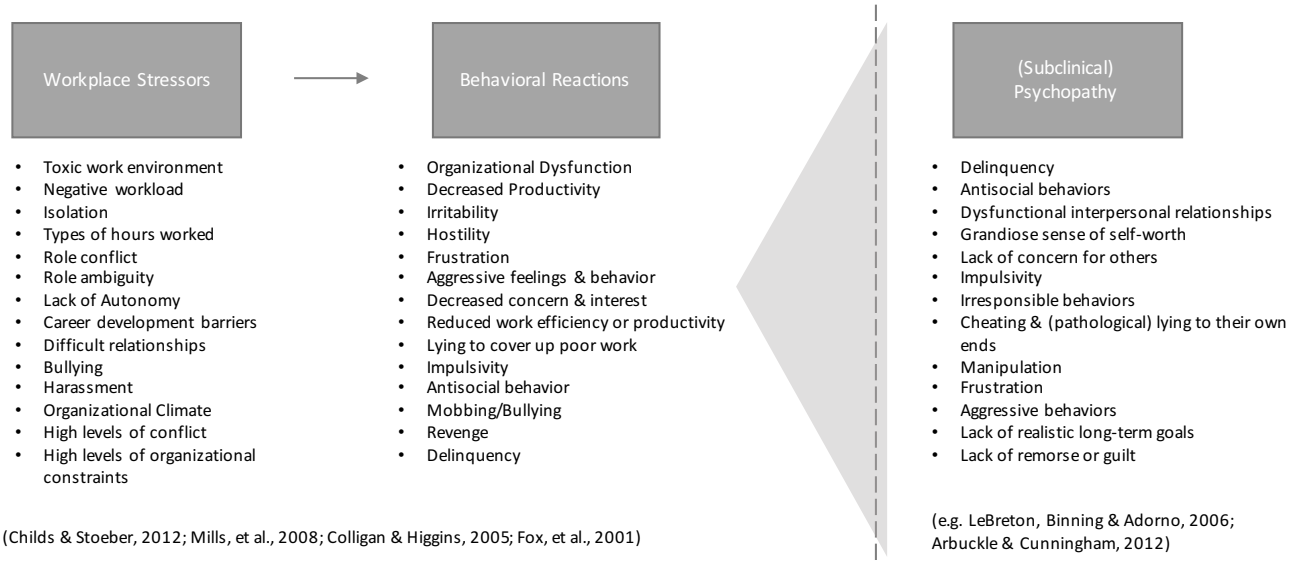



Figure 2. Behavioral reactions triggered by workplace stressors are compared to similar appearing characteristics of psychopathy.

### *2.2.Ego Depletion as a Potential Mediator*

It is inevitable for a deeper understanding of the emergence of psychopathic behaviors in the workplace to investigate and identify variables that mediate the relationship between daily role stressors and daily psychopathy. The current research assumes that the experience of daily role stressors leads to a state of ego depletion and as a consequence daily psychopathy is exhibited.

The conservation of resources theory proposes that individuals have a certain amount of resources available that help them to cope with stressors and work demands (Hobfoll, 1989). Valuable resources can be an employee's ability to self-regulate own behavior (Gino, et al., 2011), job control, participation in decision making, task variety, feedback or social support, for example (Crawford, LePine & Rich, 2010). These resources help an individual, amongst others, to achieve work goals, stimulate personal growth and development. However, high levels of job demands such as role ambiguity and role conflict lead to a depletion of resources (Lee & Ashforth, 1996) and can cause individuals to suffer from physiological and psychological consequences (Crawford, et al., 2010). Feelings of stress lead to the depletion of energy and employees feel usually (emotionally) exhausted and worn out (Crawford, et al., 2010). According to previous theoretical and empirical evidence, it is thus expected that the more stress a person experiences, the more resources might be lost.

One essential resource that can be lost as a result of role stressors could be the ability to self-regulate one's own behavior. The resource self-regulation or self-control is crucial for

people to engage in (self-) controlled and willful action (Inzlicht & Schmeichel, 2012) and to act in line with their long-term goals rather than pursuing short-term and selfish motives (Gino et al., 2011). It refers to the mental capacity that individuals possess to override or alter their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. However, previous research has shown that a loss in self-regulatory resources (e.g. due to role stressors) leads to an inability to self-regulate ones' own behavior (Neves & Champion, 2015). This is called a state of "ego depletion" (Inzlicht & Schmeichel, 2012) and is likely to result in deviant or unethical behavior (Neves & Champion, 2015; Gino, et al., 2011).

Although criticized on a large scale lately (Engber, 2016), experimental research has supported the idea of ego depletion by showing that exerting self-control on one task impairs self-control and performance on a subsequent, seemingly unrelated task. This can be explained by a shift in motivational orientation away from inhibiting and suppressing desires. After self-control exertion, individuals are usually rather motivated to act on their impulses and to engage in actions that are personally rewarding, interesting and enjoyable. Failures of self-control may be a result of strong impulses, weak control or a combination of both. As psychopaths are predisposed to engage in poorly considered and impulsive behavior to achieve their personal, immediate and selfish goals, it can be said that they show deficits in self-regulation processes (Newman & Lorenz, 2003). Role stressors are assumed to decrease this already low ability of self-regulation even more which could ultimately result in a failure to self-control own behavior. Previous research has shown that failures of self-control may lead to phenomena such as impulsivity, criminality, uncontrolled aggression, personal debt or drug abuse (Neves & Champion, 2015; Inzlicht & Schmeichel, 2012). In addition, ego depletion does not only decrease the ability to self-control own behavior and aggression but also increases the sensitivity to immediate reward and pleasure simultaneously (Inzlicht & Schmeichel, 2012). These resulting behavioral changes, as for example impulsivity, uncontrolled aggression and a heightened sensitivity to immediate reward and pleasure, seem to be similar to those of (subclinical) psychopaths. Therefore, this study assumes that psychopathic personality expressions are a consequence of individuals being in a state of ego depletion triggered by role stressors. Consequently, it will be investigated if ego depletion can explain the relationship between daily role stressors and daily psychopathy. Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

***H2: The effect of daily role stressors a) Role Conflict and b) Role Ambiguity on the exhibition of daily psychopathy will be mediated by ego depletion.***

*2.3.The Moderating Role of Trait Psychopathy*

Individuals may differ in their sensitivity and reactivity to certain situational cues (Fleeson, 2001). Therefore, this study also considers inter-individual differences in trait psychopathy as a moderator of the role stressor – state psychopathy link. It is assumed that not only situational characteristics trigger toxic behaviors in employees but rather both preexisting personality characteristics and an employee's work environment function together as determinants of subsequent behavior (Housman & Minor, 2015). Thus, both the level of trait psychopathy as well as the amount of role stressors on a work day are assumed to jointly determine the expression of daily psychopathy.

According to Higgins and Scholer (2008), the interaction between the individual (e.g. a person with high level of trait psychopathy) and the situation (e.g. high amount of role stressors on a work day) reveals how a person copes with the world and expresses his/her personality in a given moment. Usually, individuals have a preferred way of coping when dealing with stress and therefore it is assumed that ways of coping could provide a meaningful insight into a person's personality (Higgins & Scholer, 2008). The competency-demand hypothesis by Wright and Mischel (1987) is in line with this assumption. It states that psychologically demanding situations (e.g. stressful situations) reveal specific aspects of an individual's personality very clearly. A high scoring individual on trait psychopathy that encounters role stressors on a given work day will show higher levels in daily psychopathy as this is in line with his/her true personality. Thus, elicited through the situational trigger role stress, state psychopathy (thus, daily psychopathy) will be revealed.

Consequently, inter-individual differences in daily psychopathy due to a persons' level in trait psychopathy are expected. The tendency to express daily psychopathy triggered by daily role stressors is assumed to be stronger for individuals that score high in trait psychopathy than for those that score lower, resulting in Hypothesis 3.

***H3: The relationship between daily role stressors and daily psychopathy will be moderated by trait psychopathy. The effect of daily role stressors, a) Role Conflict and b) Role Ambiguity, is stronger for individuals with high levels in trait psychopathy.***

Similarly, ego depletion is assumed to explain the interaction effect between trait psychopathy and daily role stressors and the resulting expression of daily psychopathy. For individuals that score high on trait psychopathy, their individual success stands above all and they thrive more than others for power, prestige and money (Boddy, 2006). As they encounter

role stress, their way to success might be threatened. Due to the fact that they already have deficits in self-regulation processes and are predisposed to react in an impulsive, irresponsible manner to reach their own goals (Newman & Lorenz, 2003), it can be assumed that they find themselves even faster in a state of ego depletion. This results in even less self-control and therefore daily psychopathy might be expressed even more. Therefore, Hypothesis 4 proposes that trait psychopathy also strengthens the relationship between daily role stress and daily psychopathy via ego depletion.

***H4: The indirect effect of daily role stressors on daily psychopathy via ego depletion will be moderated by trait psychopathy. The indirect effect of daily role stressors, a) Role Conflict and b) Role Ambiguity, is stronger for individuals with high levels in trait psychopathy.***

The resulting conceptual model is shown in Figure 3. Based on previous theoretical insights, the current research model investigates whether daily role stressors trigger daily psychopathy. It is expected that daily psychopathy exhibits an intra-individual variability from day to day due to the amount of role stressors experienced on a specific day. Ego depletion is expected to explain this relationship. In addition, the model incorporates a dispositional construct, trait psychopathy, to account for inter-individual differences in the investigated relationships.

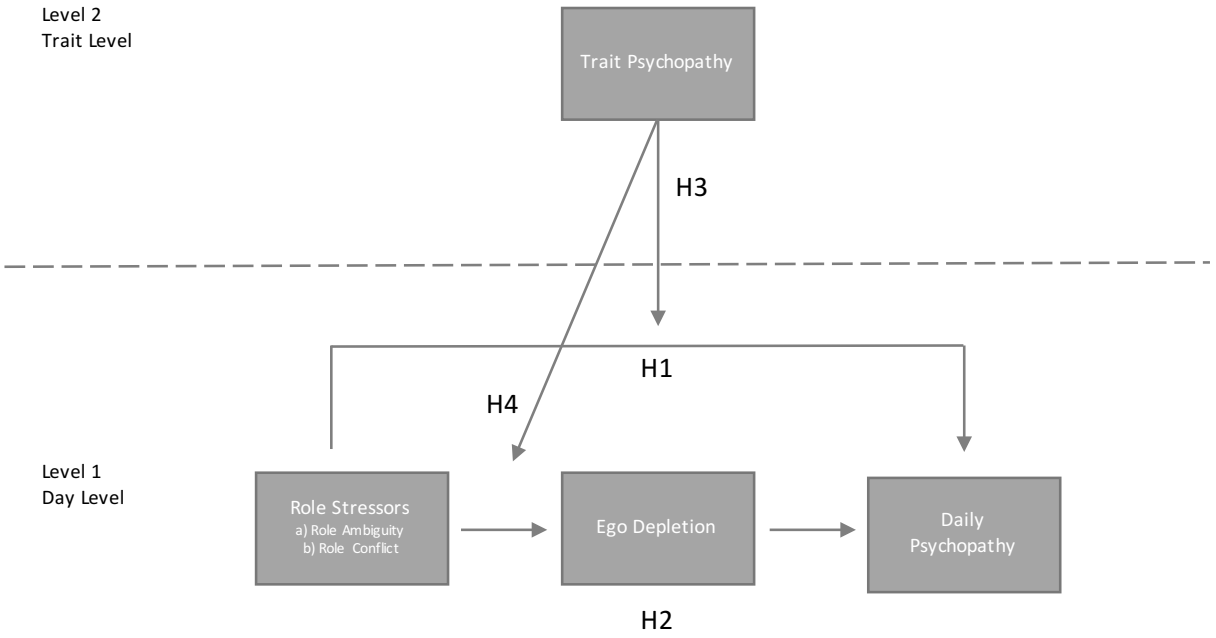



Figure 3. Research Model and Hypotheses.

## 3. Method

### *3.1.Study Design*

The current study was a 10-day diary study that was assessed with an online survey. This design was chosen as diary studies allow to analyze fluctuating phenomena. Earlier research predicted that for example a person's mood, job performance or work behavior fluctuates over time (Ohly, Sonnentag, Niessen & Zapf, 2010). Research questions that deal with the relationship of stable variables with transient states, experiences or behaviors are quite common in diary studies. As the current research assumed fluctuations in daily psychopathy due to fluctuations in daily role stressors, it seemed reasonable to use a design that aimed at capturing these fluctuations. Based on the suggestion made by Ohly et al. (2010), the daily assessments took 5-7 minutes in total.

### *3.2.Participants*

Initially, 138 information mails were sent out to people that agreed verbally to participate in the study. Of this initial pool, 104 people sent their written conformation back. To be included in the final sample and results analysis, participants needed to have completed the baseline survey in the beginning and the daily survey on at least 7 out of 10 days. This resulted in a final sample of 83 participants and consequently in a dropout rate of 20 %. For participation, several requirements needed to be fulfilled. Firstly, it was required that the participants were fluent in German as the language of the survey was German. Secondly, they needed to work full-time. Thirdly, access to internet was inevitable for survey completion. Participants were recruited randomly from the general population and therefore they were occupied in various industries. The majority of the sample worked in Germany. However, some of the German-speaking participants worked abroad, as for example in Denmark, Ireland or Switzerland. There was no clear majority of male ($N$ = 42) or female ($N$ = 40) participants, as the response rate of both genders was nearly equal (50.6 % vs 48.2 %, respectively). Two respondents did not indicate their gender. Out of the 83 participants, 41 % indicated that they had no subordinates at the moment. For the other 59 %, the number of subordinates differed. Some of them were responsible for one or two people while others leaded up to 120 employees. Also the number of years in position ranged from not even one year to 33 years of experience in their current job. However, most of the people were either one or three years in their current position.

*3.3.Procedure*

The general procedure was as follows. First, participants were approached personally and the general framework conditions were outlined to check their general interest and availability regarding participation in this study. Second, those individuals who stated their general interest in participation received an information e-mail describing the study. The information e-mail provided the participants with some basic information about the study without explicitly stating the term *Dark Personality* or any other related concepts to prevent any biases towards the study. The study was described as an examination of personality dynamics at work over a 10-day period. Participants were informed about the full aim and research question of the study in the debriefing. It was explained that the 10-day periods always started on Mondays and that a baseline questionnaire is sent out in advance with the friendly request to fill in this questionnaire before or latest on the first day of the 10-day period. The participants who were still interested to participate were asked to reply to this email indicating that they would like to participate in the study as well as their preferences and availability for the required 10-day period. Furthermore, this information mail assured that all information and answers were treated and stored confidentially and that the participant could withdraw from participation at any time without consequences. It was emphasized that participation was completely voluntarily. In addition, the snowballing technique was used. Participants, friends and family members were encouraged to distribute the study via word of mouth or e-mail in order to gain a greater pool of participants.

As soon as participants sent their written confirmation to take part in the study, they were assigned to a 10-day panel according to their preferences and availability. Data collection took place over a three-months period from beginning of April 2016 until the end of June 2016. Participants were not promised a reward for participation but it was offered to provide the participants with the outcomes of the study upon request.

In the beginning, participants received a baseline questionnaire which took 10 minutes to complete. This baseline questionnaire asked the participant to confirm their voluntary participation once again and assessed general information, demographics as well as baseline levels for role stressors and trait psychopathy. Usually, the 10-day period started on the upcoming Monday and participants received a 5-minute daily questionnaire on each consecutive working day (Monday until Friday) over a period of 10 days. This daily questionnaire was sent out each day at 3.00 pm to make sure that the participants answered their questionnaires after each working day. The daily questionnaires were open for responses from 3.00 - 11.00 pm on each day. To make sure that the promised confidentiality is

maintained, each participant was assigned a random ID number in the beginning which also ensured that all baseline and daily responses could be matched for each participant based on this number afterwards.

Due to the challenge of participation over 10 consecutive working days that participants faced, participants that missed a maximum of four responses within their 10-day period were allowed to catch up on their missing days in the following week.

### *3.4.Measures*

#### *3.4.1. Baseline measures*

*Trait Psychopathy.* Trait psychopathy was assessed with the baseline questionnaire that the participants received prior to the start of the 10-day period. It was measured using the Levenson Self-Report Psychopathy Scale (LSRP) as it was developed for use in non-institutionalized samples (Levenson, et al., 1995). Due to the fact that this study was conducted in Germany, a German translation provided by the Eberhard-Karls-Universität Tübingen in Germany was used (Sewing, 2007). The LSRP is a 26-item self-report questionnaire that distinguishes between primary and secondary psychopathy (Sellbom, 2011). The former includes a selfish, callous and manipulative orientation while the latter is characterized by impulsiveness, irresponsibility and poor behavioral controls (Walters, Brinkley, Magaletta & Diamond, 2008). Both a total score and separate scores on the two factors can be generated (Sellbom, 2011). The instructions asked participants to indicate how much they agree to the given statements in general. The LSRP items are originally measured with a 4-point Likert Scale and 7 items are reversed scored to prevent any response styles (Walters et al., 2008). However, in this study, the items were assessed on a 5-point Likert Scale (1 = *strongly disagree,* 2 = *disagree somewhat*, 3 = n*either agree nor disagree*, 4 = *agree somewhat*, and 5 = *strongly agree*) to align the number of response options between the different scales. Therefore, the third response option ("neither agree nor disagree") was created. A sample item is for example "In today's world, I feel justified in doing anything I can get away with to succeed". An example of a reversed item is "Even if I were trying very hard to sell something, I wouldn't lie about it". Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.75.

*Role Stressor Measures.* Role ambiguity and role conflict were assessed with scales that were originally developed by Rizzo, House and Lirtzman (1970) and were widely used in organizational psychology research before (Kelloway & Barling, 1990). In the baseline questionnaire, the general role stress level that the participant experienced at work was measured. The role ambiguity scale includes 6 items (all items were reversed coded) and the

role conflict scale consists of 8 items (Kelloway & Barling, 1990). Each participant responded to these 14 items on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree.* A sample item of the role ambiguity scale is "I know exactly what is expected of me". An example of an item of the role conflict scale is "I do things that are apt to be accepted by one person and not accepted by others". The internal consistency for the role ambiguity scale was 0.68 while the Cronbach's alpha for the role conflict scale was 0.78.

The role ambiguity and role conflict scales were translated from English to German using the back translation technique by Brislin (1970). For this technique, two bilingual native speakers were needed to translate the scales. In a first step, one of the two bilingual native speakers translated the original items from Rizzo, House and Lirtzman (1970) into German. In a next step, the second bilingual native speaker translated these items back to English. In a final step, the original and the back-translated versions were compared for comparisons and differences to ensure a reliable and accurate translation (Douglas & Craig, 2007).

### *3.4.2. Daily measures*

*Role Stressor Measures.* According to Ohly et al. (2010) abbreviated or adapted scales (less than five items) or single items seem suitable for a diary study. Therefore, it was decided to select the 4 items of each scale that showed the highest factor loadings (Kelloway & Barling, 1990). In the daily questionnaires, participants were instructed to indicate how much the different statements applied to the experiences they had on that specific day. An example for a daily role ambiguity scale item is "At today's working day, clear, planned goals and objectives existed for my job". A sample item of the daily role conflict scale is for example "Today, I received an assignment without adequate resources or materials to execute it". Again, a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *disagree strongly* to 5 = *agree strongly* was used. The mean coefficient alpha (across days) was 0.77 for the daily role ambiguity scale and 0.76 for the daily role conflict scale.

*Daily Psychopathy.* Daily psychopathy was assessed by the psychopathy subscale of the Dirty Dozen measure by Jonason and Webster (2010). This scale was again translated to German using the back translation technique by Brislin (1970). The Dirty Dozen consists of 12 items that assess the dark triad. The questionnaire entails three subscales for each of the dark triad personalities with 4 items each. Again, a 5-point Likert scale was used. Participants were asked to indicate how much they agree to the statements on each day. An example of a scale item is "I tend to lack remorse". The mean coefficient alpha across the 10-day period was 0.46.

*Daily Ego Depletion.* Ego depletion was measured using the State Self-Control Capacity Scale by Ciarocco, Twenge, Muraven and Tice (2013). A German translation (Bertrams, Unger & Dickhäuser, 2011) of the original items was used. This scale usually consists of 25 items. However, as Ohly et al. (2010) suggest, the daily questionnaire should not exceed 5-7 minutes in total. Therefore, an experienced researcher (Dr. Ute Hülsheger, Maastricht University) adapted this scale to a shorter diary version and selected 5 items that were best suited to be assessed on the state level and did not overlap with other scales. All of the items that were used are reversed coded. Participants were instructed to indicate how accurate the statements describe their personal feelings on that specific day. An example item is "I feel like my willpower is gone". A 5-point Likert scale was used ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree.* The coefficient alpha averaged across all measurement points was 0.87.

### *3.5. Method of Analysis*

Since this research has a nested data structure, data was analyzed with a multilevel regression analysis (i.e., the mixed model procedure) using the computer program *SPSS*. The first level was assessed at the within-person level of analysis and entailed the daily and repeated measures (over the 10-day period) of the independent variables role ambiguity and role conflict, of the dependent variable daily psychopathy and of the mediator ego depletion. The second level of analysis, the between-person level, included the measure of the moderator trait psychopathy which was assessed once in the beginning. Thus, the daily diary observations were nested within the individuals.

In multilevel models, predictor variables are usually transformed into deviations around a fixed point. This is done because multilevel models with so called centered predictor variables tend to be more stable and estimates from these models can be treated as more or less independent of each other (Field, 2014). Therefore, it was decided to center the predictor variables around the sample mean of the variables. According to Enders and Tofighi (2007), it is recommended to use both grand mean centering and group mean centering to look at the differential influence of a variable at level 1 and 2. The former refers to the mean in the given sample. For calculating the latter, each score of a given variable is taken and the mean of the scores (for that variable) is subtracted. Hence, the state variables were centered around the group mean and the trait variable was centered around the grand mean. The dependent variable daily psychopathy was not centered. For data analysis, the significance level was set to 0.05.

## 4. Results

### *4.1.Descriptives, Correlations and Intraclass Correlation Coefficients*

In a first step, means, standard deviations, Cronbach's alphas, and correlations of the variables were created. These results are summarized in Table 1. The correlations show that daily psychopathy correlated 0.36 with daily role conflict. This correlation coefficient was found to be significant. Consequently, there appears to be a weak to moderate positive linear relationship between these two variables. In contrast, daily psychopathy did not correlate significantly with daily role ambiguity, suggesting that there is no relationship. Daily psychopathy and ego depletion also correlated (-.31) significantly. Thus, a weak negative relationship between these two variables was found.

Next, ICCs were calculated (ICC = Between-Person Variance / Total Variance) to examine how much of the variance in the respective variable is due to between-person differences. It is important that the ICCs are not too high as this would suggest that most of the variation is due to the person rather than due to situational or daily influences. The ICC for daily psychopathy was 0.88, suggesting that 88 % of the variance in daily psychopathy stems from differences between persons. For both daily role ambiguity and daily role conflict the ICC was 0.82 while it was 0.89 for ego depletion. Although the ICC values suggest that there is not a lot of fluctuation in the daily variables, they still leave some variance (12 %, 18 % and 11 %, respectively) to be explained by situational factors.

Table 1

*Means, Standard Deviations, Cronbach's Alpha (Diagonal) and Correlations of the independent and dependent variables.*

| Variable | *M* | *SD* | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Daily Psychopathy[a] | 2.25 | 0.81 | (.46) | .14 | .36** | -.31** | .35** |
| 2. Daily Role Ambiguity[a] | 2.21 | 0.86 | | (.77) | .18 | -.13 | .18 |
| 3. Daily Role Conflict[a] | 1.59 | 0.82 | | | (.76) | -.19 | .22 |
| 4. Daily Ego Depletion[a] | 4.36 | 1.03 | | | | (.87) | -.21 |
| 5. Trait Psychopathy[b] | 2.05 | 0.39 | | | | | (.75) |

*Note.* $N = 83$. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$. [a] Measured at daily level; [b] Measured at trait level.

### *4.2.Tests of Hypothesis*

*Main effect.* To test the main effect of Figure 1 (Hypothesis 1), a multi-level regression analysis was conducted. Hypothesis 1 predicted that daily role stressors a) role ambiguity and b) role conflict would be positively related to daily psychopathy on the within-person level.

Separate analyses regressing each type of the daily role stressors on daily psychopathy were conducted. Results of the regression analysis are depicted in Table 2a for daily role ambiguity and Table 2b for daily role conflict. Daily role ambiguity was not significantly related to daily psychopathy, $F$ (1, 776.73) = 1.37, $t$ = 1.17, $p$ = 0.24. Thus, the level of role ambiguity consequently does not influence the level of daily psychopathy on a given day. Therefore, Hypothesis 1a is not supported. In contrast, daily role conflict is significantly related to daily psychopathy, $F$ (1, 776.86) = 4.78, $t$ = 2.19, $p$ = 0.03. Data shows that on days where people experience more role conflict, more daily psychopathy is expressed/experienced as well. Hence, Hypothesis 1b is supported.

*Mediating effect.* The mediation hypothesis (Hypothesis 2) was tested using the Baron and Kenny approach (DeCoster, 2004). Hypothesis 2 predicted that the relationship between the daily predictor variables a) role ambiguity and b) role conflict and the outcome variable daily psychopathy would be mediated by ego depletion. According to the Baron and Kenny approach, three distinct regression analyses need to be conducted to test the mediation. The significance level of the coefficients needs to be examined at each step separately (DeCoster, 2004). In a first step, a simple regression analysis was done to test if the independent variables, daily role ambiguity and daily role conflict, predict the dependent variable daily psychopathy. As the results of Hypothesis 1 already showed, the relationship between daily role ambiguity and daily psychopathy was not significant. Hence, no relationship to mediate exists and therefore the subsequent regression analyses were not considered for the independent variable role ambiguity.

In contrast, the relationship between daily role conflict and daily psychopathy was significant. In a second step, it was tested whether the relationship between the predictor daily role conflict and the mediator ego depletion was significant. Results showed that role conflict affects ego depletion significantly, $F$ (1, 776.61) = 20.21, $t$ = -4.50, $p$ = 0.00. This finding is inevitable for a mediation to exist. In the last step, multiple regression was used to predict the value of daily psychopathy from both daily role conflict and daily ego depletion. For mediation to exist, it is important that the effect of role conflict should be non-significant or at least significantly reduced in comparison to Regression 1. This would indicate that ego depletion accounts for a significant portion of the relationship between daily role conflict and daily psychopathy. In addition, the relationship between ego depletion and daily psychopathy must be significant (DeCoster, 2004). Results show that neither the effect of role conflict has become non-significant (or was significantly reduced), $F$ (1, 776.87) = 5.31, $t$ = 2.30, $p$ =

0.02, nor is the relationship between ego depletion and daily psychopathy significant, $F$ (1,776.68) = 0.81, $t$ = 0.90, $p$ = 0.37. Consequently, no mediation was shown to exist and Hypothesis 2 was not supported.

*Cross-level moderating effects.* The benefit of multilevel regression analysis is that it not only accounts for nested data but also allows to test cross-level moderation effects. This means that a variable on Level 2 (between-person variable) significantly increases or decreases the effect of a relationship between two variables on Level 1 (within-person relationship). Cross-level moderating effects were investigated in Hypotheses 3 and 4. The former predicted that the direct relationship on Level 1 between the two role stressors and daily psychopathy would be moderated by the Level 2 variable trait psychopathy. The latter stated that the indirect effect on Level 1 would be moderated by trait psychopathy. The moderator trait psychopathy was included in the random effects to allow for variations.

Results of the cross-level moderation for the direct effect (Hypothesis 3) showed that the interaction of trait psychopathy and daily role ambiguity, did not significantly predict daily psychopathy, $F$ (1, 751.55) = 0.21, $t$ = -0.46, $p$ = 0.64. Therefore, Hypothesis 3a, was not supported. Results of Hypothesis 3b revealed that the moderation of trait psychopathy on the daily role conflict-daily psychopathy relationship was also not significant, $F$ (1, 751.64) = 2.35, $t$ = 1.53, $p$ = 0.13. However, it should be noted that the p-value of 0.13 would be close to an alpha of 0.10. Thus, although this interaction was not significant at the 0.05 level here, it should not be completely excluded that a moderation might exist.

In a last step, the cross-level moderation for the indirect effect was examined. Here, the Baron and Kenney approach was followed again and the interaction effect was tested by three separate regression analyses. The first regression analysis was redundant to the test of Hypothesis 3 and was not found significant. In a second step, the interaction effect of daily role ambiguity and trait psychopathy on ego depletion was tested, $F$ (1, 752.37) = 0.51, $t$ = 0.71, $p$ = 0.48. Again, this regression analysis was not significant. The interaction effect of daily role conflict and trait psychopathy on ego depletion was also not significant at the 0.05 level, $F$ (1, 752.35) = 3.53, $t$ = -1.88, $p$ = 0.06. However, it should be noted that the p-value of 0.06 is close to the significance level of 0.05 and would have been significant with an alpha of 0.10. As the first two steps of the Baron and Kenney approach were not significant, a cross-level moderation for the indirect effect could not be confirmed.

Overall, it can thus be concluded that no significant cross-level moderation exists for both the direct and indirect effect. However, the findings for Hypothesis 3b and 4b pointed into the

right direction and were either close to significance or would have even been significant at the 0.10 level.

Table 2a

*Results of the multi-level regression analysis for predictor variable daily role ambiguity (RA) on dependent variables.*

| | | Ego Depletion | | Daily Psychopathy | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *b* | *SE b* | *b* | *SE b* |
| Step 1 (Predictor on outcome) | Daily Role Ambiguity (RA)[a] | | | .03 | .03 |
| | Interaction PSYT[b] x RA[a] | | | -.03 | .08 |
| Step 2 (Predictor on mediator) | Daily Role Ambiguity | -.13** | .04 | | |
| | Interaction PSYT x RA | .07 | .10 | | |
| Step 3 (Predictor and mediator on outcome) | Daily Role Ambiguity | | | .04 | .03 |
| | Ego Depletion | | | .02 | .03 |
| | Interaction PSYT x RA | | | -.04 | .08 |

*Note.* $N = 84$. PSYT = Trait Psychopathy. $b$ = regression coefficient; *SE b* = standard error of $b$. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.
[a] Measured at daily level; [b] Measured at trait level.

Table 2b

*Results of the multi-level regression analysis for predictor variable daily role conflict (RC) on dependent variables.*

| | | Ego Depletion | | Daily Psychopathy | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *b* | *SE b* | *b* | *SE b* |
| Step 1 (Predictor on outcome) | Daily Role Conflict (RC)[a] | | | .07* | .03 |
| | Interaction PSYT[b] x RC[a] | | | .12 | .08 |
| Step 2 (Predictor on mediator) | Daily Role Conflict | -.19** | .04 | | |
| | Interaction PSYT x RC | -.19 | .10 | | |
| Step 3 (Predictor and mediator on outcome) | Daily Role Conflict | | | .08* | .03 |
| | Ego Depletion | | | .03 | .03 |
| | Interaction PSYT x RC | | | .13 | .08 |

*Note.* $N = 84$. PSYT = Trait Psychopathy. $b$ = regression coefficient; *SE b* = standard error of $b$. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.
[a] Measured at daily level; [b] Measured at trait level.

## 5. Discussion

As previous research as well as recent corporate scandals indicate, it is extremely important to investigate triggers of daily psychopathy in the workplace. It is estimated that around three million employees and employers could be classified as fully expressing psychopathy (Babiak & Hare, 2006). Toxic behaviors at work have not only devastating effects to the well-being of other employees and to job performance but could even be a

thread to the survival of a whole organization (Boddy, 2006). There is evidence showing that avoiding hiring a toxic worker saves an organization twice as much money as the best performer would ever bring (Housman & Minor, 2015). However, as it is not always possible to screen new hires for particular toxic characteristics and reject them, it becomes increasingly important to understand the causes and mechanisms of toxic or dark behaviors in a corporate environment. Understanding the triggers of dark personality expressions at work helps organizations to manage those behaviors as they occur or to even prevent them.

This study adds to existing literature by examining the causes and mechanisms of toxic or dark behaviors in the workplace. Specifically, it was investigated whether workplace stress (in the form of role ambiguity and role conflict) is a possible trigger of daily psychopathy. In addition, it was investigated whether depleted resources can explain this relationship and further, if this relation is moderated by trait psychopathy. The findings of this research show that on days where people experience more stress in the form of role conflict, they express significantly more psychopathic behavior. Contrary to what was expected, on days where people experience more stress in the form of role ambiguity, they did not express significantly more daily psychopathy. Also ego depletion did not significantly mediate the relationship between daily role ambiguity or daily role conflict and daily psychopathy. Finally, no significant cross-level moderation of trait psychopathy on both the direct as well as the indirect effects was found.

In the current research daily role conflict was identified as one possible trigger of daily psychopathy. Previous research found already that role conflict predicts negative job-related outcomes for individuals (O'Driscoll & Beehr, 1994) and organizations (Rizzo, et al., 1970). In addition, role conflict was characterized as a hindrance stressor that diminishes an individual's perceived effectiveness on the job (Rodell & Judge, 2009). Especially this perception of reduced effectiveness on the job could be responsible for the expression of daily psychopathy. Individuals feel that their goal attainment is threatened and that they cannot meet the performance expectations posed by the job (Kiraly, 2015). As an attempt to manage this experienced hindrance from successful performance or goal attainment and to reduce the perceived ineffectiveness, individuals might be inclined to express psychopathic behaviors to reach their goals no matter what.

Besides this significant main effect, the current data set did not found the other hypotheses to be significant at the 0.05 level. Contrary to what was expected, role ambiguity did not significantly predict daily psychopathy. Although some researchers claimed that workplace stressors such as role ambiguity trigger detrimental behavioral reactions in individuals

(Schaubroeck, et al., 1989), others discussed that role ambiguity only decreases organizational citizenship behavior but that it does not necessarily increase counterproductive work behavior (Rodell & Judge, 2009). This would imply that on the one side, employees that experience role ambiguity might not explicitly harm the organization. However, on the other side, they also do not show voluntary behavior that benefits the organization. Following Rodell's and Judge's (2009) line of reasoning, this could also explain why role ambiguity does not significantly predict daily psychopathy.

Also not in line with expectations was the finding that ego depletion did not mediate the relationship between role conflict and daily psychopathy. However, in light of recent discussions in psychological literature, this finding is not as surprising as it seemed on first sight. The idea of ego depletion is largely criticized nowadays as multiple replication studies could not confirm the effect (Engber, 2016). According to Engber (2016), it could be the case that ego depletion is extremely sensitive to how a study is conducted. In contrast to pen- and paper-based studies, the switch to computer-based surveys could be enough to make the effect of ego depletion disappear. If this assumption is true, it could provide one possible explanation of why ego depletion did not mediate the relationship between role conflict and daily psychopathy in this computer-based survey.

Finally, trait psychopathy was not found to moderate both the direct effect of role conflict on daily psychopathy as well as the indirect effect via ego depletion significantly. This finding was surprising as previous research already indicated that toxic workers are both a function of preexisting characteristics as well as of the environment they work in (Housman & Minor, 2015). However, one possible explanation is that the current data set did not show much variance in trait psychopathy so that no significant interaction effect could have been found. Further research with a bigger sample size could help to clarify if dispositional variables interact with situational triggers. In addition, also the methodological limitations should be taken into account when interpreting the findings and for further research.

### *5.1.Limitations and future research*

Although one significant trigger of daily psychopathy in the workplace was identified, results of this study should still be considered with caution as the study faces several potential limitations. Therefore, further research on triggers of psychopathic behaviors in the workplace seems inevitable. First of all, data was obtained via a self-report survey. A possible drawback of self-report studies is the common source variance which might lead to inflated results (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). In addition, the reliability and validity of

the results of the psychopathy scales is questionable since psychopaths tend to be dishonest and often do not perceive themselves as others see them (Smith, Lilienfeld, Coffey & Dabbs, 2013). Psychopaths have extremely good impression management skills which help them to control the impressions that others form of them (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Hence, it cannot be guaranteed that people with psychopathic tendencies were clearly identified. Future research should take this into account by using both self- and other ratings, for example. Another possibility to prevent or at least reduce impression management would be to measure psychopathic traits with normal personality inventories, as for example with the Big Five (Miller, Lyman, Widiger & Leukefeld, 2001).

A second and serious drawback constitutes the reliability of the four items of the Dirty Dozen scale that were used to assess daily psychopathy. The mean coefficient alpha was 0.47 for this study. Jonason and Webster (2010) state that the "lower internal consistency may be a result of the double barreled nature of the item, "I tend to not be too concerned with morality or the morality of my actions"" (p.422). Hence, the item covers different topics at the same time which might be difficult to answer for participants. For example, the participant could be concerned with the morality of his/her actions but at the same time he/she is not concerned with morality or vice versa. Usually, it is expectable that the coefficient alpha for a scale with only four items is quite low since it increases with the number of items in a scale (Jonason & Webster, 2010). However, it should be noted that according to Jonason and Webster (2010) alpha's in the .60s are reasonable for four-item scales. Consequently, the mean coefficient alpha (across days) of 0.46 was nevertheless low. Therefore, further research should potentially search for an alternative scale.

Third, this research was analyzed with a cross sectional analysis. Therefore, no causal inferences could be made. Future research could replicate the current study with a cross-lagged analysis to examine, for example, if a high amount of stress experienced at one day enhances daily psychopathy at the subsequent day. Cross-lagged analysis might also reveal ego depletion as a significant mediator as it could be investigated if the depletion of self-control resources on a stressful day causes the expression of daily psychopathy at the subsequent day.

Apart from considering these limitations, future research could investigate different boundary conditions to reduce role conflict and to prevent that it does not provoke psychopathic behaviors. It would be extremely valuable to discover what organizations could do to limit the chances of a "normal" worker to become a future toxic worker. It could be examined, for example, if more control and autonomy over the different roles or behaviors to

perform (and thus less role stress) would lower the likelihood of showing daily psychopathy. This would help to identify boundary conditions and possible ways to reduce or even prevent psychopathic behaviors. In addition, stress in the form of role stress is already quite specific. Further research should try to examine also other stressful situations to be able to generalize that stress can be responsible for expressing psychopathy in the workplace. Moreover, it would be beneficial for future research to identify mediators that explain the relationship between role conflict and daily psychopathy. One possible mediator that can be imagined to explain this relationship could be the level of trust in the supervisor. Although it should be emphasized again that role conflict is not exclusively induced by leadership behaviors, it can be imagined that a lower level of trust in the supervisor could explain why an employee expresses psychopathic behavior instead of discussing the stressor in a direct and open manner.

### *5.2. Contributions to Existing Literature and Practical Implications*

The current research provides a number of theoretical contributions. Firstly, previous research investigated so far mainly the consequences of toxic personality expressions in the workplace. By now, no study investigated specific situational triggers of psychopathic behaviors in the workplace. Also not much attention was yet devoted to the mechanisms by which potential triggers may be linked to state psychopathy (Jackson & Schuler, 1985). However, this is extremely valuable for a deeper understanding of the emergence of psychopathic behaviors in the workplace. With this knowledge, both theory and praxis can search for ways to reduce these behaviors or even try to prevent them from occurrence in the first place. In addition, existing studies about corporate psychopathy or toxic workers did not differentiate between traits and states. The hierarchical structure of the current model combines both personal and situational predictors of psychopathic behavior.

The present study also carries multiple practical implications. Based on the current results, it can be said that toxic behaviors are not only due to an individual's personality but can also be elicited by situational factors such as role conflict. This finding is extremely important for managers as it emphasizes that the exhibition of psychopathic behaviors is not just due to an individual's constellation of personality traits but that the work environment also play a role. Role conflict is often, although not always, the result of ineffective leadership behaviors (O'Driscoll & Beehr, 1994). Therefore, it is recommended to make managers aware of several facts. First, it is important for them to know that role conflict was identified as a potential trigger of toxic behaviors in the workplace. Second, it is inevitable to make them aware that

they can be responsible for the experienced role conflict in their followers which could consequently lead to the expression of psychopathic behaviors. Once managers are told about these potential consequences, they could try to prevent role conflict from occurring in the first place. Consistent expectations and the consideration of other responsibilities that an employee might have help to reduce role conflict (Griffin, 2007). Also clear instructions and priority setting can help an individual to reduce role conflict. However, it should be emphasized that not only managers are responsible for identifying ways to reduce role stress. Also employees should be trained to resolve potential role conflict. It might be helpful for employees to learn how to prioritize and balance multiple obligations so that certain performance requirements are always met and role conflict is minimized (Kiraly, 2015). In addition, also an open feedback culture might support employees to confront their supervisors with their experienced role conflict and a solution can be found together. Due to devastating consequences that psychopathic behaviors can have on an organizational effectiveness, managers and employee should be informed about the characteristics and traits of psychopaths' as well as about their ability to manipulate co-workers, employees, supervisors and organizational systems to their own ends. On top of that, different assessment methods could help in detecting people's tendency to display psychopathic behaviors in general. The B-Scan 360 could for example serve as a regularly assessment method in the future since it includes both self- and observer ratings which may be advantageous in detecting a psychopath (Mathieu, Hare, Jones, Babiak & Neumann, 2013). Another way to detect psychopaths and unethical behavior in an organization is to give employees the possibility to give feedback anonymously since they may not be comfortable with directly criticizing their co-worker, for example.

## 6. Conclusion

The present study identified role conflict as a trigger of daily psychopathy in the workplace. This finding is valuable for both theory and practice. So far no other research has investigated triggers of daily psychopathy in the workplace in depth. However, especially for organizations it is extremely important to know how they could reduce the likelihood of psychopathic behaviors since consequences can not only be devastating for the well-being of employees but also for the performance of a whole organization. Therefore, future research should try to discover boundary conditions and ways how role conflict could be prevented or reduced so that psychopathic behaviors do not follow.

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