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PSYCHOLOGICAL LOAD OF MANAGERS AND DESTRUCTIVE ORGANIZATIONAL PROCESSES

The activities of managers require much more energy than the functioning of people who do not manage teams of people and organizations. It generates a specific type of responsibility related to the implementation of four basic management functions – planning, organizing, leading/motivating, controlling (Stoner, Freeman, Gilbert, 1997; Kraczkla, 2013) – and an extensive area of decision-making and risk. The cost may take a physiological, psychological and behavioral dimension.

The purpose of the article is to identify adverse conditions and behaviors of persons performing managerial roles that may be related to destructive processes and situations occurring in the organizations and teams they manage. The work is based on psychological theories defining and describing dysfunctional states of managers, often resulting from stress. The transfer of this knowledge to management sciences is an attempt to find the source of most conflicts in organizations and increase the efficiency of their resolution.

Psychological costs incurred by managers can be perceived as the form of somatic ailments, feelings of excessive anxiety (anxiety), emotional balance disorders, workaholism and other forms of addiction, interpersonal conflicts, intensification of narcissistic, Machiavellian, psychopathological behaviors (a set of features called dark triade in the literature), and as a result to the creation of adverse internal organizational conditions, for instance mobbing. The research on irregularities in the workplace shows a significant increase in negative phenomena associated with the abuse of power. The manifestations of these abuses are the inappropriate treatment of employees by superiors; building an atmosphere that generates stress, verbal violence, humiliation, discrimination, exclusion, and physical violence.

Keywords: management, Dark Triad, narcissism, machiavellianism.

1. INTRODUCTION

Every human action mobilizes mental energy to achieve goals. The more ambitious goals, the greater responsibility, risk, uncertainty, and the more difficult functioning conditions, and consequently stress, the resources of individual energy deplete faster, and this loss is tantamount to bearing a psychological cost. In the era of globalization, even too high level of innovation can generate an excessive increase in stress and lead to a decrease in efficiency (Cowan, Sanditov, Weehuizen, 2011; Poczowski, 2003). The pace of civilization changes, the ambiguity and uncertainty of operating conditions that had never been experienced before, chronic stress and time pressure, cognitive loads and inability to deal with emotions create exponentially growing challenges for the confidence and self-esteem of

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modern managers. It is not recognized and defined, as often behind the steadfast boss's facade lies not only low self-esteem, but also mechanisms of unconstructive coping with it, e.g. narcissism, self-deception, addiction, and consequently burnout or even depression. The manager, like the athlete, is required to have an exceptionally high level of resilience and deal with difficult situations. High self-esteem can be a correlate of achieved successes and creative, ambitious activities for the organization, and in the case of managers it is associated with creating working conditions and environment. Phenomena and organizational processes may take the form of pathological dimensions of cumulative psychological burden (Kraczla, Lis, 2014), and the manifestation may then be the occupational burnout syndrome or workaholism, or mobbing in the social dimension (Litzke, Schuh, 2008).

In the literature on management, much attention is paid to the effectiveness of management, leadership and conflicts in organizations and in teams. New ways of solving problems are constantly being generated; from heuristic methods, to innovative ones of psychological work, such as life coaching or executive coaching. However, it is important to understand the deepest ground for the destructive functioning of managers, embedded in personality. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to indicate those states and behaviors of managers, which are often the result of unconstructive coping with stress, and transferred to the organizational field and manifested in pathological relationships with employees. These personality irregularities mean that the most professional work with managers (trainings, trainings, sessions, etc.) may be ineffective or effective only for a short time. Adverse states and behaviors have been classified in this study as psychological costs and described in chapters three and four; these will be dysfunctions manifested in various addictions (workaholism, alcoholism, gambling or sex addiction), burnout, often ending in depression (chapter three), and the deepening of certain features that may be present in the personality structure, i.e. narcissism, Machiavellianism and psychopathy, definitely anti-social (chapter four). These considerations are preceded by the second chapter, which presents the specifics of managerial stress based on research on Robert Sapolsky's stress. The fifth chapter contains an example of one of the most destructive phenomena in the organization, which is a glaring manifestation of abuse of power, i.e. mobbing.

The last part of the article attempts to synthesize the argument so conducted, based on psychological theories defining and describing the above-mentioned issues, and the transfer of this knowledge to the field of management science in order to realize the need for a different view on pathological relationships in the organization and their sources.

2. SPECIFICITY OF MANAGER STRESS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH ON STRESS BY ROBERT SAPOLSKY

Ogińska-Bulik (2006) in studies aimed at determining the level of stress experienced in various professional groups showed that managers had one of its lowest levels, while in this group of respondents (70 managers) high psychological and social costs were found; 30 percent of them were qualified to the group with high severity of occupational burnout, and 45.7% they constituted a group with worse health condition and it was one of the highest rates among the studied professional groups (somatic symptoms, anxiety, insomnia, various types of functional disorders). The author notes a negative correlation of self-esteem with mental health, as well as the predictive role of self-esteem for professional satisfaction (Kliś, Kossewska, 1998; Tucholska, 2009; Ogińska-Bulik, 2006). Test results may also indicate the unaware or hidden effects of stress.

Managers who have the ability to recognize and control emotions more often try to solve problems by tasks, while they rarely use substitute activities or even avoidance (Kwaitkowska, 2011). The key role of self-assessment is also emphasized; people with a more favorable arrangement of temperamental traits (low reactivity and high persistence) have positive self-esteem. Self-assessment determines the level of individual's activity and the emotions they experience. It allows predicting the direction of affection and the level of activity (Łaguna, Lachowicz-Tabaczek, Dzwonkowska, 2007). The studies by these authors and others cited by them (Baumeister, Smart, Boden, 1996) show that people with high self-esteem experience more positive emotions and are more active and persistent than people with low self-esteem, often showing an even avoidance attitude towards difficulties, challenges and risks. Also in the aspect of self-perception in the area of task and social functioning, people who assess themselves better will have a more positive self-image. The results of these studies are particularly significant in relation to persons performing managerial functions; their reactivity and emotionality is responsible for the interaction and work climate, and persistence determines the choice of goals and strategy of action.

High and, above all, stable self-esteem, low reactivity, an ability to control and awareness of emotions are features that allow managers to deal with stress better. Robert Sapolsky at Stanford University is developing some ways to defend a man against the harmful effects of stress. He conducts long-term research; every year, for several weeks in East Africa he observes the same population of wild baboons. The reason for the stress of these animals is not the unique threats associated with functioning in the natural environment, but the social and psychological mess created by them – they stress each other. They, therefore, present a model example of diseases caused by stress. Stress is the body's response to an emerging challenge; it can be life threatening, but most often something completely trivial or a situation that many people experience every day. An important stress factor is the lack of control over the situation and the unpredictability of the development of the situation. Sapolsky has found a relationship between stress levels and a place in the baboon's social hierarchy; stress mainly affects low-ranking individuals. Some herds have over a hundred individuals, have well-educated brains, are able to manage large, complex communities, at the same time they are often cruel to each other, torment each other, have typical Machiavellian human traits. Survival requires a good strategy. The smartest and most aggressive males have the highest position and associated privileges.

Do similar relationships occur in the human world? This problem has been studied by, among others Michael Marmot, conducting health research for 28,000 people in the United Kingdom for forty years (Whitehall Studies). The aim of the project is to determine whether stress is also related to social position among people. Marmot argues that socioeconomic position is an important determinant of health. This principle applies even when aspects of life such as income, education and risk factors affecting health (e.g. smoking) are controlled. The causal path that Marmot identifies concerns the psychological benefits of "controlling" one's life (Marmot, 2015). He confirms the relationship - the lower the position in the social hierarchy, the higher the risk of developing morbidity, especially heart disease. Stress also determines life expectancy. He determines that deputy bosses bear greater risk and are more exposed to stress than their bosses.

In both the cited studies, homogeneity (invariance of other factors outside the hierarchy – access to food, medical care, etc.) was taken care of, and in both, almost identical results were obtained allowing to conclude that subordinates are more stressed than managers.

Each subordinate experiences uncertainty in relations with superiors, especially in relations with dominant alpha individuals eager for power.

The complement of these two studies is the third one by Carol Shively, which investigates the relationship between stress and pleasure (Tamashiro, Sakai, Shively, Karatsoreos, & Reagan, 2011); a low social position can be compensated by the ability to experience joy and positive, good emotions and the fourth study by Elissa Epel, which allows concluding that cell regeneration under stress provides the ability to show compassion and care for others (Blackburn, Epel, 2016).

A breakthrough in Sapolsky's research was a tragic event concerning the baboon herd, which was the subject of his research. Almost half of the flock died as a result of eating meat infected with tuberculosis. As a result of the analysis, it was found that all alpha males died, all aggressive males who did not maintain close contact with anyone, without wasting time wandering around. The herd has changed its structure.

Two times more females than males survived, and the surviving males were good and gentle, sociable, kind to females. The atmosphere in the herd changed completely; low level of aggression, calmness, lack of stress, more intense positive experiences, better health of all individuals. In the human environment, in organizations, especially corporate organizations, wherever there is a hierarchical structure, exactly the same dependencies and phenomena take place. People's living and working conditions are crucial to their health and well-being. Managers' ability to deal with stress is particularly important. Destructive forms of people management (e.g. mobbing) often result from the use of non-constructive ways of dealing with problems.

The next part of the article will discuss particularly dysfunctional behaviors (resulting from addiction and burnout) and irregularities embedded in human personality, manifesting themselves in the antisocial functioning of managers, i.e. narcissism, Machiavellianism and psychopathy, which may be aggravated by stress and lack of skills to deal with it.

3. PSYCHOLOGICAL COSTS OF MANAGERIAL ACTIVITY AS UNCONSTRUCTIVE FORMS OF COPING WITH STRESS

Psychological costs incurred by managers in connection with their activities, specific responsibility, and risk-bearing work can be predicted in the form of somatic complaints caused by the feeling of excessive anxiety, depression, addictions of various types – workaholism, alcoholism, sexuality, addiction gambling and extreme sports, interpersonal conflicts, up to burnout.

In practice, many managers do not cope with a strong psychological burden or use unconstructive methods of releasing tension by activating self-regulation mechanisms and developing personal strategies of survival (coping) in difficult situations (Penc, 2010).

Due to the complexity of this issue, they will only be signaled in this article; it is necessary to present the problem, but at the same time it is impossible to analyze it thoroughly.

3.1. Workaholism and other types of addictions

The tendency to addiction, as an unconstructive way of dealing with difficulties, may be one of the manifestations of divergence between explicit and latent self-esteem.

Workaholism is a multidimensional construct. In one of them, workaholism is treated as an internal compulsion to perform work, which is difficult to resist, because stopping work, as well as refraining from doing this activity, causes a build-up of suffering, more

precisely fear, anxiety, or discomfort, and its essential tension is a component (Wojdyło, 2003, 2004). Work remains the addict's only way to reduce this suffering. Workaholism can be understood as an area of norm which is represented by commitment to work (Van Beek, Taris, Schaufeli, 2011). Most studies on workaholism show that workaholism is pathological in nature and does not contain a job satisfaction component (Robinson, 2007; Schaufeli, Taris, Bakker, 2008).

The work craving theory (Wojdyło, 2013) proposes a four-factor structure of work addiction, consisting of obsessive-compulsive tendencies, expectations about self-esteem derived from earning, expectations about experiencing emotional relief in connection with the reduction of negative emotions and withdrawal symptoms, and neurotic perfectionism.

There are many behavioral addictions and new forms are emerging. They are usually related to stress and inability to deal with it. In the group of managers, in addition to workaholism, alcoholism, sexuality, shopaholism and drug addiction, there are distinguish addiction to gambling, extreme sports, network-holism and cyber addiction (addiction to the Internet, social media, smartphone, internet pornography). These self-destructive addictions are typically an escape form of coping with mental loads. These addictions can be treated as a disease of emotions, escape from some suffering, a problem by providing yourself with instant pleasure, guaranteeing quick relief in difficult feelings, but in the long run deepening problems and devastating health.

3.2. Occupational burnout

It is now believed that occupational burnout syndrome is one of the most serious consequences of experiencing chronic stress in the workplace (Kraczla, 2013) and one of the most important psychological costs incurred by managers. It is a kind of exhaustion of the individual's personal resources (Le Blanc, de Longe, Schaufeli, 2002). It is also perceived as a "syndrome affecting a human being part of the human – work system" (Wilsz, 2009), it can be understood as the most generalized psychological cost of a person performing managerial functions or as one of the components of this cost.

On the basis of clinical analyzes, Freudenberg defined burnout as exhaustion of strength and discouragement from further activities and further actions (Freudenberg, 1974). Occupational burnout is different from other psychological states (stress, fatigue, a sense of alienation) by three factors: emotional exhaustion (a sense of excessive emotional burden of work performed), depersonalization (objective response to other people, cynicism) and a reduced sense of personal accomplishments (sense of reduction own competences and capabilities) (Maslach, 2006). Maslach believes that "causes of burnout should be sought more in the work environment than in the characteristics of the person" (Maslach, Leiter, 2011). Important factors are dissatisfaction, routine and how autonomous we can be. The behavioral addictions previously described enhance the sense of burnout; you do not treat a drink or lamp after work as a way to forget about it, a way to survive the next day, and even more so do not diagnose yourself as an alcoholic – a standard example of self-deception. The role and the image of a tough boss often hinders an insight and sincere recognition of one's own problem, and in the case of narcissistic or Machiavellian personality it even prevents it.

4. THE “DARK TRIAD” CONCEPT WITH REGARD TO MANAGERS

Analyses of managerial behavior appear in many studies in the context of the “*Dark Triad*” theory, referring to personality traits of narcissism, machiavellianism and psychopathy. These features are conceptually different, they are separate constructs, there are many behavioral, personality and cognitive differences. However, research indicates that they are consistent with each other, are associated with a manipulative style of interpersonal functioning and predispose persons in managerial positions to commit crimes, cause social anxiety, and in organizations of chaos, abuse, mistreatment and abuse of employees.

It is worth analyzing the managerial behavior implied in the Dark Triad concept, although there is no simple cause-effect relationship. It is rather a circular relationship; for those with power, narcissistic, Machiavellian and psychopathic traits may increase, and then it is a category of psychological cost and burden, but at the same time people with these traits are more likely to become managers.

4.1. Narcissism

In the analysis of narcissism, self-esteem and the ability to communicate with oneself are the key factors. In the well-known myth of Narcissus, the greatest tragedy of a young man was not love for himself, for his own image, although this work is interpreted so often, but a complete lack of contact with himself. Inability to love resulted from the inability to recognize myself. It is assumed that underlying instability of self-esteem is low latent self-esteem. People with high overt and low hidden self-esteem show a higher level of narcissism, more favor their own group and use more defense mechanisms to maintain a positive image of Me (Bosson, Brown, Zeigler-Hill, Swann, 2002). Narcissistic people usually establish relationships with others when they help them achieve their goals or strengthen their self-esteem in other ways.

Theories of two narcissistic personality researchers have gained special significance in psychology; Heinz Kohut perceives the cause of pathological narcissism in the development process, when at some point the appropriate responses from the environment are missing, in particular the acceptance, admiration and confirmation of the child's value on the part of the parents, while Otto Kernberg believes that narcissism should be viewed as a trait of some intensity – from minor, through narcissistic personality disorder, malicious narcissism, to anti-social personality. In his opinion, at a very early stage of development there are serious disturbances that result in the creation of primitive defense mechanisms, which lead to the creation of narcissism. He distinguishes pathological narcissism from normal narcissism.

Referring to the five-factor personality model by Paul Costa and Robert McCrae – the Big Five – narcissism positively correlates with extraversion ($r = 0.42$) and openness ($r = 0.38$), and negatively with agreeableness ($r = -0.36$) (Paulhus, Williams, 2002). Narcissism has also been found to be associated with psychopathy.

Narcissistic managers often get used to associating self-image and self-esteem with the admiration and respect of others, which is why research confirms their high level of need for social approval. They are sensitive to criticism or failure; this sensitivity can lead to withdrawal from social interaction.

4.2. Machiavellianism

Machiavellianism describes a personality dimension or social behavior strategy that involves manipulating people for personal gain (Christie, Geis, 1970). This personality is

highly valued in business, politics, wherever influences or ruthless fights are being fought hard. The Machiavellian manager guarantees efficiency, consistency, maybe profit, but unfortunately the methods he uses are unethical, indecent, demolishing social and organizational order. He seeks to control the behavior of his employees and generally all people who are in his sphere of influence. According to the principle, the end justifies the means, breaks moral norms, sets its own rules. The dominant feature is the lack of feelings, inability to empathize, distrust, instrumental treatment of others, uses lies, deceit, manipulation. The studies confirm the relationship between Machiavellianism and psychopathology. In the long run they do not cope in real life and their behavior is ineffective. In organizations, they lead to destruction, quarrel employees, humiliate, use mobbing (See: Pilch, 2008). They are able to disorganize the most efficiently operating enterprises, only to achieve their own individual benefits. The presence of Machiavellianism in the organization has been positively correlated with unproductive behavior in the workplace and deviation in the workplace (Kessler i in., 2010).

In relation to the Big Five personality model, Machiavellianism correlates negatively with agreeableness ($r = -4.47$) and conscientiousness ($r = -4.34$) (Paulhus, Williams, 2002).

4.3. Psychopathy

Psychopathy is classified as the highest level in the spectrum of anti-social personality disorders. In relation to the Big Five model, psychopathy correlates with all its factors: extraversion ($r = 0.34$), agreeableness ($r = -25$), conscientiousness ($r = -24$), neuroticism ($r = -34$) and openness ($r = 0.24$) (Vernon, Villani, Vickers, Harris, 2008). The dominant feature of this type of personality is a very low level of empathy, with a high level of impulsiveness and the search for emotions (Hare, 1985).

Psychopaths usually make up a relatively small percentage of staff in the workplace, most often at senior levels in corporate organizations. An example of their "strategy" is intimidation, conflicts, stress, staff turnover and absence from work, and consequently reduced productivity, and lower quality (Boddy, 2011). Criminal psychologist Robert D. Hare is the author of the term "snakes in suits", which is synonymous with psychopaths in the workplace. The ethical standards of entire organizations can be severely damaged (Boddy, Ladyshevsky, Galvin, 2010). Psychopathic managers want power and control above all. He generally seems intelligent, honest, powerful, charming, funny and entertaining. They quickly evaluate what people want to hear, and then create stories that match those expectations. They'll get people to do work for them. They have little patience in dealing with others, show shallow emotions, are unpredictable, independent and do not take responsibility for failures (Clarke, 2012). They take excessive risks, don't care about managing, and bring businesses down.

5. MOBBING AS AN EXAMPLE OF DESTRUCTIVE PHENOMENON IN ORGANIZATION (BASED ON THE REPORT "WORK SAFETY IN POLAND 2019; MOBBING, DEPRESSION, STRESS AT THE WORKPLACE" PROJECT OF A SAFETY COALITION AT WORK)

The definition of mobbing is contained in art. 94 § 2 of the Labor Code. According to the content of this provision, mobbing means actions or behaviors concerning an employee or directed against an employee, consisting in persistent and long-lasting harassment or intimidation of an employee, causing him an underestimated assessment of professional

suitability, causing or aiming to humiliate or ridicule an employee, isolating him or eliminating colleagues from the team (https://kadry.infor.pl/kadry/indywidualne_prawo_pracy/mobbing/3006787,Odszkodowanie-za-mobbing-zmiany-od-7-wrzesnia-2019-r.html).

Mobbing can also mean undermining the competences of an employee, hindering him from performing his duties, limiting access to information, interrupting an employee's statements, discrimination based on e.g. age, gender, political or religious views, etc., pressure to violate regulations in the workplace, sexual allusions and unambiguous jokes, insults by words or gestures, threats, shouting, slandering, spreading rumors, criticism of personal life, but also disregarding and ignoring. There are organizations where mobbing is a management strategy.

SW Research, the Agency for Market and Opinion Research carried out research aimed at examining employees' awareness of the impact of psychosocial factors in the workplace on work safety. The survey was carried out between 29.07.2019 - 09.08.2019. The CAWI (on-line) interviews were conducted using the SW Panel internet panel. The study involved full-time office and physical / mental employees employed in small, medium and large companies from various industries. The sample was N = 1517 interviews (<http://bezpiecniwpracy.pl/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Raport-Bezpiecze%C5%84stwo-Pracy-w-Polsce-2019.pdf>).

The research showed a large scale of psychosocial phenomena, such as inappropriate treatment by a supervisor, verbal violence, mobbing, discrimination or exclusion.

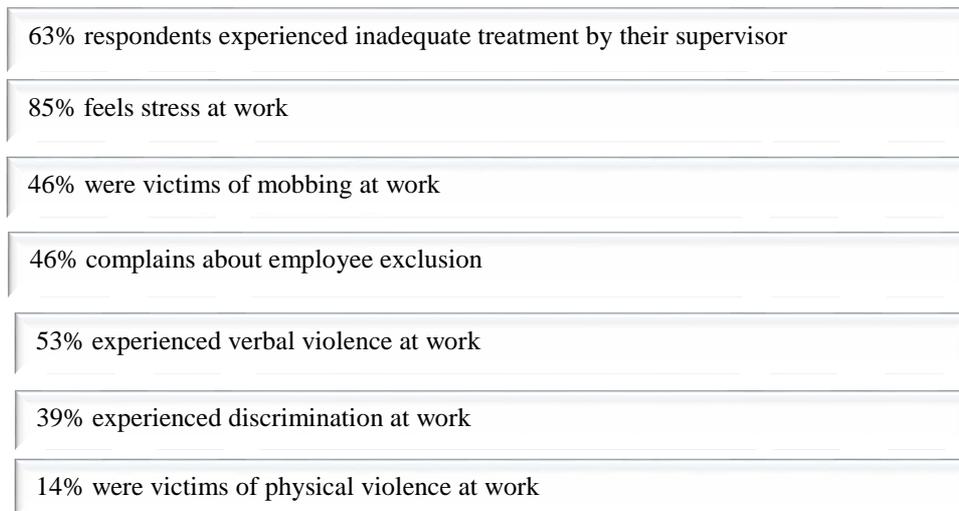


Figure 1. Results of employee awareness research on the impact of psychosocial factors in the workplace on work safety

Source: Own based on: (<http://bezpiecniwpracy.pl/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Raport-Bezpiecze%C5%84stwo-Pracy-w-Polsce-2019.pdf>).

As much as 85% respondents stated that they feel stress at work. 63% cases of ill-treatment of an employee happened due to the supervisor. Almost half of the respondents (46%) declared that they were a victim of mobbing at work and the same response rate applies to employee exclusion. Over half of the surveyed employees (53%) experienced verbal

violence at work, and 39% discrimination. As much as 14 percent among the respondents were victims of physical violence at work. For comparison, according to the Gazeta Prawna.pl website (serwisy.gazetaprawna.pl access: 27/12/2019) in 2014, CBOS research showed that in the five years preceding the survey, 17% employees were harassed, i.e. over 2 million people, and 5% declared that they were systematically harassed. Nearly half of the respondents pointed to unfounded criticism, humiliation, undermining authority, insulting with pejorative or vulgar terms, loud slander, and psychological abuse. Mobbing in Poland is a mass phenomenon, but hardly anyone opposes it.

The situation is very bad; mistreatment of employees and an atmosphere of stress at work seems to be common, while the role and responsibility of a manager is to provide employees with appropriate psychosocial conditions. This is not only an ethical obligation and enshrined in law, but also a condition for achieving good results and successes of the organization.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Managers are a group that may less often express discomfort, discontent, stress since they have a greater sense of control and are prepared for periods of the “bear market”, temporary crises, failures. According to research, the sense of power and control increases managers' self-esteem and independence, and reduces the effects of stress (Schultz & Schultz, 2006). And this is a positive reaction. However, when too much load and mental tension is not constructively discharged, then there may be projections of negative feelings and emotions, both those conscious and deep in the subconscious mind of the boss, on employees. Then, most often, there are drastic changes in relational and communication functioning in the company and this is a simple path to regression and collapse, also in the financial sphere.

Observations and statistical data show (although these are still too few, both in Poland and in Europe) that mobbing is a mass phenomenon. The number of pending discrimination and mobbing proceedings is increasing in Poland each year. But conformism is still dominant; employees often choose to be in an atmosphere of fear, humiliation and mistreatment instead of reacting.

The Dark Triad is associated with leadership and interpersonal influences (Furnham, Richards, Paulhus, 2013). Jonason and colleagues said that each of the features of narcissism, Machiavellianism or psychopathology is associated with workplace manipulation, but each with unique mechanisms; Machiavellianism is associated with the use of excessive charm in manipulation, instilling trust, and then rejecting, based on lies, narcissism is associated with physical appearance – studies have shown that only narcissistic people were rated as more attractive, other features of the dark triad were not related to appearance (Dufner, Rauthmann, Czarna, Denissen, 2013), and psychopathy involves physical hazards (Jonason, Słomski, Partyka, 2012).

The purpose of the considerations was to identify adverse managerial states and behaviors related to their personality traits and associated with negative psychosocial conditions in the workplace. It was established that these are addiction tendencies, depression and neurosis resulting from burnout and personality disorders such as narcissism, Machiavellianism and psychopathies. They were classified as psychological costs incurred by managers. The above findings allow formulating hypotheses that are recommended to be verified in further studies, especially empirical studies. It can be concluded that managers'

inability to cope with stress causes a number of somatic, psychological and behavioral consequences for themselves, but also consequences for the organization in the form of negative and destructive phenomena. The attempts to solve these situations may, therefore, be ineffective due to incorrect diagnosis of the problem; a defect inherent in the personality structure, exacerbated by the feeling of excessive stress, not the lack of managerial competence supplemented by, e.g., education or coaching.

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