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## Article

# Impact of dark triad personality traits on turnover intention and mental health of employees through cyberbullying

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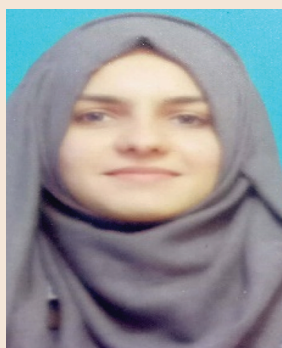
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## MANAGEMENT | RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Impact of dark triad personality traits on turnover intention and mental health of employees through cyberbullying

Rimsha Baheer<sup>1</sup>, Kanwal Iqbal Khan<sup>2\*</sup>, Zeeshan Rafiq<sup>3</sup> and Tayyiba Rashid<sup>4</sup>

**Abstract:** The increased usage of technology has engendered different forms of bullying. While scholars affirm that cyberbullying is considered to exhibit the most harmful impacts on individuals among the different types of bullying. It needs to be underscored that the multifaceted and recurring nature of cyberbullying, particularly in the workplace, has a more hazardous effect on employees. It is urged that the highly competitive working environment has exacerbated the problems of rivalry among employees, which subsequently pushes them towards cyberbullying. Despite an extensive body of knowledge on traditional bullying, research still lacks the effect of cyberbullying in the workplace context. This research addresses the gaps by explaining the impact of the dark triad of personality traits (DTPT) on turnover intention and employees' mental health through cyberbullying. It incorporated a unique multistage sampling approach in which data were gathered through self-administered questionnaires from the banking sector. The analyses showed a direct relationship between the DTPT and turnover intention. Cyberbullying partially mediates the relationship between DTPT and turnover intention. Findings also indicate that the DTPT negatively affects employees' mental health. A vital facet of this research is testing the mediating role of cyberbullying between DTPT and employees' mental health and turnover intention. The findings are of great value to organizational stakeholders, where management can adopt various strategies and training programs to reduce the detrimental effects of cyberbullying. Such initiatives enable employees to cope with mental health issues, mitigating negative workplace behaviour and minimizing turnover intention.



Rimsha Baheer

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rimsha Baheer is a prospective researcher who has served as Visiting Lecturer at the University of Engineering and Technology, KSK. Her area of interest is organizational psychology, related to workplace conflict, dark personality traits, and consequences of employee mental health. Results from this study are part of a research program that seeks to examine the impact of dark triad personality traits on turnover intention and mental health with the mediating role of cyberbullying. The research findings would be beneficial for organizational stakeholders, managers and employees.

### PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Cyberbullying has gained researchers' attention in the recent era of ICT during the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet, researchers often neglect the consequences of cyberbullying in the banking sector. Considering the mental health and workplace outcomes, the recent study has contributed to the body of knowledge by examining the mediating role of cyberbullying between dark triad personality traits, mental health and turnover intention. The research findings would help organizations to devise strategies to help employees minimize the impacts of DTPTs and cyberbullying.

**Subjects:** Work & Organizational Psychology; Mental Health; Business, Management and Accounting

**Keywords:** Dark triad of personality traits; machiavellianism; narcissism; psychopathy; turnover intention; mental health; technology; workplace behaviour

**JEL Classification:** D23

## 1. Introduction

Social networking services are expanding exponentially in the contemporary era of information and communication technology (ICT). An outcome of this unprecedented technological proliferation is that organizations are rapidly moving towards digital businesses (Ng et al., 2022). The COVID-19 epidemic has recently made it inevitable for organizations to switch towards online activities (Khan, Niazi, et al., 2021). Such a working environment has exacerbated the rate of cyberbullying within organizations (Barlett et al., 2021). This study analyses cyberbullying, a dangerous form of technological exploitation (Enosh & Tzafrir, 2015). Literature ascertains that the major cause of cyberbullying is increased competition among employees in organizations' synchronic hi-tech working environments (Keskin et al., 2016). Employees are involved in cyberbullying for their gain, sometimes due to their manipulative nature (Shih et al., 2021). It is also theorized that upper-level management employees with high authority and responsibility are more involved in cyberbullying than other management levels (Baloch, 2020). Näsi et al. (2017) accentuated that cyberbullying is a comparatively new phenomenon induced due to the increasing online shift of organizational work during the pandemic. Cyberbullying resonates with traditional bullying and occurs in communication, which is done with e-mail, prompt messaging services and social networking sites. It takes diverse forms, from antagonistic and intimidating behaviour towards spreading rumours and social elimination.

Geng et al. (2022) proved that cyberbullying harms individuals and organizations. Its adverse consequences include anxiety, depression, stress, burnout, increased physical and mental symptoms, job dissatisfaction, lower performance, lower work engagement, absenteeism, increased turnover intention, and suicidal ideation. Individuals with the dark triad of personality traits (DTPT), i.e., machiavellianism, narcissism and psychopathy, possess manipulative, exploiting, self-aggrandizement characteristics and are more inclined towards cyberbullying (Kraus et al., 2020). Specifically, the current meta-analysis indicates that vicious behaviour encompassing antagonistic, authoritarian and manipulative behaviours harms employees' mental and psychological well-being (Lilienfeld et al., 2012). In organizations, employees with dark traits are predisposed to cyberbullying, which causes job dissatisfaction, lower performance, and work engagement (Madan, 2014). As a result, employees falling victim to cyberbullying face various mental health outcomes and decide to quit the organization (Khan, Saleem, et al., 2021).

It is pertinent to note that Williams and Paulhus (2004) underscored that studies probing negative psychology should be more focused and thorough. They proposed that negative traits (i.e., machiavellianism, narcissism and psychopathy) should be interrogated individually, and future studies should evaluate all three to determine the primary predictor of a given outcome (Khan et al., 2020). Notably, most of the previous research has relied on a broad comparison of the negative traits. Such studies are limited in holistically delineating the impact and influence of negative traits on phenomena such as hurting self-esteem and self-respect, causing job stress, job burnout and dissatisfaction (Hutchinson et al., 2006). A significant contribution of this research is that it probes the ramification of the negative traits on workplace outcomes such as performance and productivity of employees as well as cyberbullying by taking into consideration the discrete nature of the negative traits. Thus, this research endeavours to simultaneously extrapolate the mediating role of cyberbullying on DTPT and turnover intention and the mediating role of cyberbullying between the relationships between DTPT and mental health. Although these relationships

have vast implications for employee well-being, they have been scantily researched and must be brought to the fore (Szabó et al., 2021).

Since “Big Five Personality Traits” has delivered a consolidated taxonomy to examine personalities considered crucial for communication and accretion of empirical studies, the current research study has bridged a perceptible research gap. Using the Big Five as the standard taxonomy allows for assessing the relative significance of the Dark Triad in occupational contexts for both theoretical and practical frameworks. To the best of our knowledge, no study has examined this topic with the following context until now (Paleczek et al., 2018). It must be underlined that human resources will likely not succeed at combatting traditional bullying or cyberbullying without management and leadership support. Specific policies, such as those based on a zero-tolerance policy, have also been found ineffective in decreasing workplace bullying; a more unifying approach must include individual, interpersonal, and organizational dynamics to eradicate the issue. This research will aid management in developing policies that will save victims from emotional and physical health issues, re-educating the aggressor, and saving the firm both monetarily and reputationally. Moreover, Cyberbullying would be measured by Cyberbullying: Screening of Peer Harassment Scale (Machimbarrena & Garaigordobil, 2017) rather than NAQ-R Layman’s criteria for traditional bullying (Iftikhar & Beh, 2019) as the traditional scale have been exploited by the majority of researchers in their studies. Furthermore, multiple items scale will be used for accuracy and comprehensive identification of cyberbullying as encouraged by researchers (Safaria et al., 2020), which has been influenced by many researchers. Hence, the objective of the research study is to examine the impact of DTPT on turnover intention and employees’ mental health through cyberbullying.

## **2. Theoretical foundation and hypotheses development**

### **2.1. Conservation of resources theory**

The conservation of resources theory was postulated by Hobfoll (1989). It is based on the ideology that individuals are encouraged to guard their contemporary resources, i.e. conservation, and to obtain new resources, i.e., acquisition (Halbesleben et al., 2014). Resources include entities, states, circumstances and other particulars that are significant to an individual. The theory of conservation and acquisition develops various principles, primarily known as the “primacy of resource loss”. It is psychologically more detrimental for any individual to lose resources as compared to the extent that it is helpful for them to gain the resources they lost (Cacioppo & Gardner, 1999). Lata and Chaudhary (2021) discussed that mental health conditions at the workplace arise when the central resources of the employee are threatened with any loss. They also highlighted the mental health issue when resources are lost, or there is a failure to achieve central resources.

Hence, this research is based on the principle that mental health and psychological resources are significant in dealing with workplace challenges, i.e., cyberbullying, as it provides a sense of community, meaningful employment, and alignment of organizational values with personal values. Such resources help to enable the individual to effectively cope against conditions, decreasing the chances of considering workplace behaviours unfavourable (Chaudhary & Islam, 2022). Suppose an employee has a meaningful workplace perception. In that case, it could increase employees’ positive emotions towards the job, which leads to job satisfaction and decrease mental health issues, abhorrence, and their inclination towards turnover intention (Arnold et al., 2007). Furthermore, the social support acquired from the sense of community at the workplace increases employees’ coping capability and moderates adverse workplace events such as workload, workplace incivility, and cyberbullying behaviour (Thoits, 1986). On the contrary, a lack of value congruence overwhelms the employees and increases job dissatisfaction, mental health issues and turnover intention (Lehman, 2011).

### **2.2. Transactional theory of stress and coping**

The Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping explains psychological stress as a distinctive association between an individual and the environment that the individual evaluates as exceeding

their resources and threatening their well-being (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The theory comprises two types of cognitive appraisal: first is the appraisal of the stressor, whereas the other is the coping mechanisms we will adopt to decrease the impacts of the stressor. In the primary appraisal stage, the individuals will evaluate if and how the circumstances are admissible for their objective fulfilment or well-being (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Hence, the literature showed three patterns of possible consequences of such an appraisal phase. First, when the stressor is considered irrelevant, there are no associations for an individual's well-being. Second, when the stressor is considered positive, it improves the individual's well-being. Third, the situation seems to negatively impact the individual's well-being when the stressor is considered stressful.

Then the individuals move towards the secondary appraisal phase, assessing the potential coping mechanisms to deal with such stressful circumstances (Scherer et al., 2001). This theory has been used in Information System literature to examine coping strategies with disruptive events regarding ICT in the workplace (Beaudry & Pinsonneault, 2005) and mental health problems caused due to employees' exposure to ICT (Day et al., 2010). Whereas, in association with cyberbullying, this theory has been used to examine the psychological adaptations of victims and the strategy they adopt to cope with this situation (Raskauskas & Huynh, 2015). Hence, this theory provides an appropriate framework to explore the appraisal of cyberbullying experience, the tool of ICT victims' suffering and their consequences on victims' job performance and psychological factors. Such events negatively affect victims' job performance, leading to turnover intention and increasing mental health issues.

### **2.3. Research model and hypothesis development**

The DTPT is an individual's propensity to be insensitive and unemphatic towards other co-workers. In their studies, Leonelli et al. (2020) state that the term "dark" infers that an individual owning such a personality possesses vicious abilities, including association with a devious relational style. Machiavellianism is described as manipulating others for personal gains, immorality and self-aggrandizement. Narcissism is characterized by grandiosity, immodesty, vanity and unempathetic nature. Lastly, psychopathy is characterized as displaying antisocial behaviour, assertiveness, egocentricity and callousness (Hare, 1999). It engenders a tendency in individuals to manipulate their colleagues for their advantage, which ultimately adversely impacts the work environment (Włodarska et al., 2021). If individuals possess DTPT, they have a negative relationship with their subordinates and manipulate others for their purposes (Kananifar et al., 2019). It comprises three interrelated but socially aversive personalities: machiavellianism, narcissism and psychopathy (Jones & Paulhus, 2014). Machiavellianism circumscribes the actions of an individual to manipulate others for their purpose (Rim, 1992). These persons possess deception, scepticism, and amorality and naturally have cold attitudes (Al Ain et al., 2013). Narcissism is a multidimensional phenomenon that includes grandiose and vulnerable narcissism (Joshani, 2021). Individuals with grandiose narcissism exhibit extravagant self-worth, feelings of grandiosity and superiority and have little empathy toward others, while individuals with vulnerable narcissism are defensive and insecure of others (Mojsa-Kaja et al., 2021). They are hyper-sensitive to criticism from others (Chan & Cheung, 2020). Such individuals have high self-esteem and self-seeking behaviour. They have negative perceptions and manifest incompatible interpersonal qualities such as power, egotism, and rebellion (Crowe et al., 2019).

Garofalo et al. (2021) discussed psychopathy in the contemporary psychological body of knowledge that possessed characteristics of callousness, lack of impulsive control over other individuals, exploitative attitude towards others, lack of remorse for their actions and antisocial behaviour. Moreover, cyberbullying is defined as bullying in which the perpetrator exploits digital sources, adversely affecting individuals' private life and mental health (Juvonen & Gross, 2008). Mental health includes an individual's emotions, psychology, and social health. Mental health affects how an individual meditates, senses and performs while engaging in daily life. Many researchers are persuading on the mental health of individuals in any social setting (Kananifar et al., 2019). Turnover intention is an employee's inclination to resign from the organization voluntarily



(Dearlove, 2003). It includes various indicators of an employee's tendency to leave the company, the likelihood of looking for another job if there is a better chance of employment and sometimes leaving a job due to workplace stress, frustration and immoral behaviour (Kartono & Hilmiana, 2018). Turnover intention can be influenced by the individual and the organizational factors the employee performs (Treglown et al., 2018). Various studies (Leonelli et al., 2020) highlighted the advantages of dark triad personality traits by arguing that entrepreneurs and employees with higher DTPT are more inclined to be goal-oriented and experienced to gain prestige, power, and attain resources from the workplace environment. On the contrary, it is also associated with negative consequences such as cyberbullying, divergent workplace behaviour etc. (Ahmed & Islam, 2022; Khan et al., 2022).

#### **2.4. Mediating role of cyberbullying between dark triad personality traits and turnover intention**

Machiavellianism is characterized by following their interest. These people have less tendency to interact and little sociopolitical dedication effectively. Moreover, they are greedy for control and status and prefer to exploit opportunities to maximize their profits (Zettler et al., 2011). Cherulnik et al. (1981) inspected the extent to which employees exploit machiavellianism characteristics to manipulate social and interpersonal interactions. High machiavellianism often outperforms low machiavellianism in negotiating and forming alliances. They are likely to use other individuals and less likely to be worried about others regardless of their interests, which is negatively associated with empathy. They show callous properties towards their co-workers, affecting the turnover ratio (Jakobwitz & Egan, 2006). Individuals with higher machiavellianism tend to unveil behaviours in unethical norms to get their purposes which can affect their colleagues' mental health and might leave the organization (Becker & Dan O'Hair, 2007). Some studies reveal that they parade immoral behaviours. e.g., unethical attitude toward their stakeholders and co-workers, embellishment of the act and causing social damage to their associates to get ways did (Greenbaum et al., 2017). Turnover is an earnest issue in the organization as it involves both financial as well as non-financial resources of the organization. Past studies showed a positive relationship between machiavellianism with turnover intention (Chung, 2021). In contrast, previous studies showed that employees work with narcissistic individuals leading to turnover because they do not align their goals with the organizational goals. Hence due to differences in shared values of the organization and their values, there is more probability of employees towards turnover intention (Jiang et al., 2019).

Studies showed that narcissistic individuals create a deceiving work atmosphere that adversely affects their co-workers' performance and increases employee turnover intention (Foult et al., 2018). Employees with hostile working environments consider quitting their jobs if their ethical principles deviate from them. When the working atmosphere is based on anxiety, trauma, and intimidation, they naturally prefer to quit the organization due to decreased job satisfaction and employee engagement (Çelik, 2018). Employees working in narcissistic workplace environments are more inclined towards getting absent from their workplace they experience a breakdown. Hence, they are more expected towards turnover and more inclined to seek better job opportunities or quit the organization. Studies showed a negative association between narcissism and employee job satisfaction (Blair et al., 2008). Managers who exhibit narcissistic persona are engaged in expertise towards manipulating, intimidating as well as dishonest to acquire their preferred job status. They use such strategies more frequently than their natural abilities and take more recognition for accomplishment than they deserve; if they fail, they are responsible to their co-workers for their failures. Khan et al. (2020) demonstrate that narcissism is a self-absorbed individual. They exhibit characteristics of self-importance, visualize enthusiastically regarding victory and supremacy, undertake resilient wisdom of inimitability and low sympathy, and habitually abuse or take advantage of their coordinates; they use their fragile self-esteem to get advantages from other organizations.

Khan, Niazi, et al. (2021) demonstrated that psychopathy is a personality disorder that stimulates antisocial and bullying behaviour towards other individuals with whom they interact for their

benefit. Psychopathy influences the health of individuals who witness it and become the victim of psychopathic behaviour, which can be done on personal and professional grounds. In the meantime, it affects the workplace outcomes of individuals who boost turnover intention (Boddy, 2017). Psychopathy is considered the most dangerous and destructive trait of all dark personality traits (Williams & Paulhus, 2004). Some studies showed that employees working with such individuals who exhibit psychopathic traits in their direct colleagues are more inclined towards lower job satisfaction and employee distress, face work-family conflict, and are more inclined to quit the organization (Mathieu & Babiak, 2016). Researchers have validated a positive association between two study variables, i.e. DTPT and adverse workplace outcomes (Cao et al., 2019). In this regard, turnover intention and cyberbullying are examples of workplace outcomes due to a DTPT and are deliberated to have detrimental consequences for the organization.

Similarly, cyberbullying attenuates productivity and work performance, which can be costly to an organization. It also lowers job satisfaction, increasing employee turnover rates (Miao et al., 2019). Cyberbullying is associated with various adverse effects, including unease, stress, depression, suicidal ideation, sleeping difficulties, reduced mental and somatic well-being, responsive complications, job dissatisfaction, reduced performance and turnover intention towards the victim (Vranjes et al., 2017). Machs are more expected to display counterproductive work behaviour towards their co-workers or less inclined to share knowledge (Dahling & Whitaker, 2008). Narcissism and psychopathy are reflected in low agreeableness as well as low conscientiousness. They are more likely to affect the workplace outcome and the organization's turnover intention (Zettler et al., 2011). In light of these assertions, it is propounded that cyberbullying behaviour is mainly manifested in individuals who exhibit DTPT. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate how cyberbullying mediates the relationship between DTPT and turnover intention. Based on the above discussion, we proposed that:

**H1:** *Cyberbullying mediates the relationship between DTPT and turnover intention.*

### **2.5. Mediating role of cyberbullying between dark triad personality traits and mental health**

DTPT affect employees' mental health through their conduct and behaviour (Baughman et al., 2012). For example, machiavellianism was associated with organizational embezzlement, uncooperative leadership and personal counterproductive work behaviour, such as mistreatment of associates, which affects their performance and well-being (DeShong et al., 2015). Narcissists have been perceived to participate more commonly in interpersonal (e.g., exploitation of co-workers) and organizational counterproductive work behaviour, e.g., misappropriation (Papageorgiou et al., 2019). Personalities who score more regarding psychopathy personality traits have been recognized to display spontaneous work performances, e.g. Offensive administration and workplace violence (O'boyle et al., 2012). These three personality traits have been found to associate positively with organizational maltreatment and other forms of bullying, affecting the mental health of employees and their satisfaction towards their job (Lata & Chaudhary, 2021). In their study, Chaudhary and Islam (2022) state that mental well-being has become a foremost source of complications in the era of technology. It is mainly when an individual perceives any bullying behaviour impersonated by its environment, which they could not be capable of coping with. In the same study, researchers explain that the causes of mental health issues include workplace inequality, social support, information confusion, and cyberbullying (Ahmed & Islam, 2022). Studies showed that psychopathy is positively associated with angst, melancholy, reduced awareness about well-being and higher responsiveness towards anxiety for the person facing it (Johnson et al., 2015). Such individuals act negatively regarding problem-focused management and public support seeking.

Mojisa-Kaja et al. (2021) have shown the positive relation of machiavellianism with stress and is negatively related to mental health and have been recognized as prognosticators of



sleep disorders, anxiety indifferences as well as prejudice of improbability. Some studies proved a negative relation between machiavellianism with mental health, and it is positively associated with anxiety and depression (Lata & Chaudhary, 2021). Some studies reported a negative association between machiavellianism and the well-being of other individuals with whom they are interacting in their workplace setting, affecting their performance and mental health as they suffer from the cold, manipulative nature of the interaction (Kananifar et al., 2019). If an individual possesses machiavellianism properties, they are known to be negatively associated with the capability to read the feelings of others and positively associated with alexithymia (Wastell & Booth, 2003). They show no concern towards what others feel about their attitudes and lousy attitudes towards others in such a way that they affect the mental health of their co-workers (Austin et al., 2007). The narcissistic admiration and rivalry concept (NARC) model explores two types of narcissism: admiration and rivalry. These two factors are positively associated with each other. Narcissistic admiration is grounded on an emphatic self-enhancement (self-promotion) approach, categorized as endeavouring for exceptionality and dominant imaginations. In contrast, a narcissistic rivalry is grounded on an incompatible self-preservation tactic, categorized by endeavouring for sovereignty and depreciation of others. They are linked to contradictory social consequences (Fang et al., 2021).

Narcissism showed positive connotations with the health and mental toughness of such individuals. These individuals, for their empowerment and sense of supremacy, feel inferior to other individuals. They lack confidence due to reflection of such behaviour, feel dissatisfied with their job, and exhibit mental illness (Joshnanloo, 2021). Psychopathy is the most assertive interpreter of bullying behaviour. When individuals high in psychopathy expose bullying behaviour towards others, they do so with reduced empathic concern, affecting the victim's mental health (Tokarev et al., 2017). It is contended that cyberbullying consequently leads to several mental health issues that have a debilitating effect on employees (Baumeister et al., 2000). Implications of cyberbullying include both physical and psychological dilemmas. It is deleterious to employees' mental health to the extent that they may ultimately commit suicide due to depression and anxiety (Kanapathipillai & Mahbob, 2021). Employees use cyberbullying to harass their colleagues and team members to exploit them and imbalance the power dynamics (Kircaburun et al., 2019). Hence, mental indications such as depression, anxiety, panic, and insomnia and physical indications such as weight loss, exhaustion, headache and trembling are some consequences of cyberbullying in professionals (Samnani & Singh, 2012). The persistent experience of such symptoms negatively impacts employees' mental health (Park & Choi, 2019).

Other ramifications that research has elucidated comprise a higher turnover intention, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), more chances of cardiovascular syndromes and decreased emotional well-being of the individual. Thus it is maintained that cyberbullying has a nocuous influence on the mental as well as physical health of the employees (Wilson & Nagy, 2017). Victims of cyberbullying suffer from despair, apprehension and mental health issues (van Geel et al., 2017). It is asserted that dark triad traits are engaged in cyberbullying due to their exploitativeness, ferociousness, lack of compassion, higher impulsivity, ethical disentanglement and the gratification of others' travail (Goodboy & Martin, 2015). Consequently, it is surmised that these dark traits are linked with cyberbullying, which subsequently affects the mental health of cyberbullying victims due to increased levels of depression, burnout and anxiety (Kircaburun et al., 2019). Based on the above discussion, we have proposed the following research hypothesis:

**H2:** *Cyberbullying mediates the relationship between DTPT and mental health.*

**Figure 1. Conceptual model.**

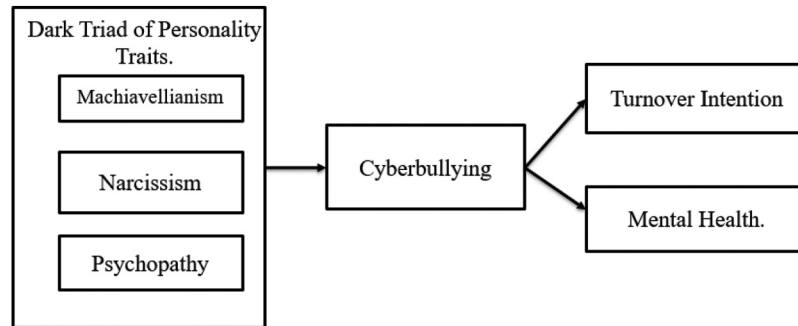


Figure 1 explains the conceptual model outlining the relationship among the independent variable DTPT and dependent variables (turnover intention, mental health) through the mediating effect of cyberbullying.

### 3. Materials and Methods

#### 3.1. Population and sample

The objective of the study is to analyze the mediating role of cyberbullying between DTPT and employee turnover intention and mental health. The data were collected from employees of the banking sector of Pakistan for the following reasons: first, in the Pakistani context, the role of the banking sector is crucial in economic development (Baloch et al., 2022). In developing economies like Pakistan, this sector is in the nurturing phase as it provides firm support to enhance favourable economic situations and needs further interrogated (Peachey et al., 2014). Second, it is flourishing and is more inclined towards online work during COVID-19. Third, it is also noteworthy that mental health issues in banking professionals have augmented considerably over the last decade, affecting their performance and leading to turnover (Giorgi et al., 2017). Fourth, the employees were from different countries and exhibited diversification in organizational principles, strategies, and practices compared with the Pakistani work environment, due to which employees working in this sector have to face different problems, especially in a pandemic situation, particularly bullying (Anwar et al., 2020). Further, it fits the context of the current study and meets the research objectives.

This study incorporated a multistage sampling technique. In the first instance, six banks were randomly selected out of thirty-two registered scheduled banks in the State Bank of Pakistan. Of the six randomly selected banks, three were public, and three were private. In these chosen banks, questionnaires were conveniently distributed among all the members of banking employees. Initially, most of the employees were hesitant to report the cyberbullying issue. Still, we ensured the confidentiality of the response that their identity would not be disclosed at any stage of the investigation to get accurate results, and then they agreed. In our study, we used a sample-to-item ratio theory with the criteria of ten responses against each item to select a sample size of 510 (i.e.  $51 \times 10$ ) (Ahmad et al., 2023; Islam et al., 2022). Hence, 510 responses were acquired from different positions of banking employees in top-level management, middle-level management, supervisory level and non-managerial level employees (Uddin et al., 2016). 430 questionnaires were reverted, giving a response rate of 84.31%. 20 were incomplete as some employees could not answer the required questions. Therefore, they were not helpful for exploration. The remaining 410 were used for the study, and it reports that the response rate was 80.39%.

The questionnaire was categorized into two sections. The first section comprises socio-demographic information regarding the population to get information about employee gender, position, age, experience, etc. The second section included questions related to the study variables. SPSS was used for the demographic analysis of respondents. Results show that approximately 57% were male, whereas 43% were female. 50.0% of the respondents were married. The employees

falling in the age group (31–40) constituted the highest percentage of the respondents (52%), indicating that most banking employees are young. Most of the respondents had a Master's degree (55.1%), i.e. 226 out of the total sample of 410. Likewise, 118 respondents had a Bachelor's level education (28.8%), 65 respondents had MS level education (15.9%), and only one participant out of the 410 had a PhD degree (0.2%). Most respondents had (0–5) years of experience, i.e., 258 (62.9%). Likewise, 134 respondents (32.7%) had an experience of (5–10) years, 17 (4.1%) had (10–15) years of experience, and one (0.2%) participant had an experience of (15–20) years. The findings further reported that most respondents were involved in middle management, 231 (56.3%), 74 (18.0%) in top management, 92 (22.4%) at the supervisory level, and 13 (3.2%) respondents had a non-managerial position.

### 3.2. Measurements

Turnover intention is the employee's inclination to resign from the organization willingly. We have adopted three items turnover intention scale from (Karatepe, 2013). Mental health includes an individual's emotions, psychology, and social well-being. It affects how an individual, sense, respond and acts while engaging in their day-to-day lifespan (Kananifar et al., 2019). The Depression Anxiety Stress Scale, which consists of 21 items, was used to evaluate mental health and associated states of well-being, such as depression, anxiety, and stress, to measure employees' mental health outcomes. The DTPT consists of machiavellianism. Machiavellianism is defined as the deception of the rights of others to manipulate them, to focus on their interests, to express their feelings, and to deviate from typical moral codes (Chung, 2021). Narcissism is a personality trait in which an individual possesses characteristics such as magnificence, superiority, self-love, prerogative and resentment. Thirdly, psychopathy is a dark personality trait that consists of four constructs: interpersonal (magnificent sense of dignity, obsessive mendacious, cunning); Affective (lack of scruple, superficial effect, lack of compassion, no acceptance of obligation for actions); lifestyle (need for motivation, opportunistic lifestyle, lack of objectives, impulsivity); and antisocial (Poor negotiating reins, delinquent, Annulment of conditional release, Felonious versatility). To measure DTPT dimensions (machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy), 12 items were taken from Jonason and Webster (2012). Cyberbullying is a form of bullying behaviour where the individual exploits through an ICT network, including cyberspace, mobile phones and other online media, to abuse the victim that invades their personal life, consequently influencing their mental health (van Geel et al., 2017). It was measured by 15 items (Machimbarrena & Garaigordobil, 2017). The questionnaire consists of a total of 51 items measured on 5 points Likert-type scale from 1, "strongly disagree," to 5 "strongly agree" (Karatepe, 2013).

## 4. Results

Partial least square structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) was used to measure the proposed conceptual framework through Smart PLS 3.3 statistical analysis software. PLS-SEM consist of two significant constituents. The outer model is the measurement model, whereas the inner model is the structural model (Hair et al., 2020). There are many advantages to using PLS-SEM. It investigates the statistical models to illustrate the causal relationships between variables. Moreover, it efficiently various constructs and measure small sample sizes and interrelated items by determining measurement and structural model's independent regression analysis (Hamdollah & Baghaei, 2016).

The reliability and validity of all variables were evaluated using PLS-SEM to ensure the constructs' reliability and validity. In PLS-SEM analysis, reliability and validity are the two most crucial aspects used to evaluate the outer model (Tenenhaus et al., 2005). Legitimate analysis results are the base of concluding a relationship between the inner and outer model of our constructed conceptual model (Peachey et al., 2014). The value of factor loadings of our variable items ranged from 0.712 to 0.904. The internal consistency and reliability of our variable scale were acceptable for all items; for in-depth information about the following analysis, consult Table 1.

**Table 1. Measurement model ( $\alpha$ , CR, and AVE)**

Constructs	Mean	SD	$\alpha$	CR	AVE
Mach	3.83	1.013	0.858	0.905	0.705
Narc	3.99	0.945	0.764	0.849	0.584
Psycho	3.886	0.966	0.796	0.868	0.621
CB	3.79	1.066	0.948	0.954	0.579
MH	3.92	1.031	0.963	0.966	0.576
TI	4.16	0.951	0.783	0.874	0.697

$\alpha$  = Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient; CR = Composite Reliability; AVE = Average Variance Extracted

Table 1 confirms the value of the measurement model that comprises of  $\alpha$  "Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient"; CR "Composite Reliability" and AVE "Average Variance Extracted". These factors measure the reliability and validity of our study variables. To analyze if the observed items of all study constructs are strongly correlated, we have estimated the AVE and the composite reliability (CR) (Abd-El-Fattah, 2010). Moreover, to measure the internal consistency of study variables, Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability will be used. It shows how closely study constructs are related to each other. In order to examine the convergent validity of all constructs, AVE would be used. Hair et al. (2020) state that AVE values > 0.5 and CR greater or equal to 0.7 represents appropriate convergent validity. In contrast, the internal consistency of the study variables was analyzed with Cronbach's alpha coefficient ( $\alpha$ ) value for all items proposed in the questionnaire (Khan, Saleem, et al., 2021). Table 2 reported the results for discriminant validity with Fornell-Larcker Criterion valuation with the square root of the study constructs. The table shows that the square root of the AVE highlighted is greater than its highest construct's correlation with other constructs. Therefore, the discriminant validity of the constructs is established, confirming that each variable is distinct from the other variable (Asghar et al., 2022).

This study used structural equation modelling, a robust multivariate analysis method, to measure and evaluate the association of observed and latent variables. It followed a bootstrapping method to estimate the mediating role of cyberbullying with related study constructs. The structural model was designed on Smart PLS, and the model's fitness is also confirmed. The model is a good fit Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) = 0.051; Chi-Square = 8017.866; Normed Fit Index (NFI) = 0.603. R-square values explain how well the independent variables explain the variation in the dependent variable. The next step was to analyze the direct relationships between machiavellianism, narcissism, psychopathy (independent variable), turnover intention, and mental health (dependent variable). Our research hypothesis posited that the DTPT, i.e., machiavellianism, narcissism and psychopathy, would affect employees' turnover intention through the mediation of cyberbullying.

**Table 2. Discriminant validity (Fornell—larcker criterion)**

Constructs	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. CB	<b>0.761</b>					
2. Mach	0.316	<b>0.84</b>				
3. MH	0.708	0.368	<b>0.759</b>			
4. Narc	0.546	0.256	0.494	<b>0.764</b>		
5. Psycho	0.535	0.317	0.514	0.564	<b>0.788</b>	
6. TI	0.643	0.334	0.687	0.386	0.42	<b>0.835</b>

CB= Cyberbullying, Mach=Machiavellianism, Narc=Narcissism Psycho=psychopathy, MH=Mental health, TI=Turnover Intention.

**Table 3. Results for structural equation model**

Hypothesized Path	$\beta$ -Values	T-Statistics	p- values
<b>Direct Effect</b>			
Mach -> MH	0.202	4.6	0
Mach ->TI	0.211	4.253	0
Mach ->CB	0.134	2.577	0.01
Narc -> MH	0.277	4.567	0
Narc -> TI	0.195	2.684	0.008
Narc -> CB	0.343	4.492	0
Psycho -> MH	0.297	4.809	0
Psycho -> TI	0.246	3.323	0.001
Psycho ->CB	0.299	4.15	0
CB -> MH	0.708	20.482	0
CB -> TI	0.643	17.071	0
<b>Indirect Effect</b>			
Mach -> CB -> MH	0.095	2.507	0.013
Mach -> CB-> TI	0.086	2.541	0.011
Narc -> CB -> MH	0.243	4.482	0
Narc -> CB -> TI	0.221	4.523	0
Psycho -> CB -> MH	0.212	4.026	0
Psycho -> CB -> TI	0.192	3.96	0

*chopathy, MH=Mental health, TI=Turnover Intention.*

The values of all the direct relationships on the paths are presented in Table 5, which includes  $\beta$ -values, t-statistics, and p-values. As itemized in Table 5, machiavellianism had a significant and positive relation with turnover intention and cyberbullying, as evidenced by beta value ( $\beta$ ) = 0.211, 0.134 and path coefficient ( $p$ ) = 0, 0.01, respectively. Narcissism was also positively related to turnover intention and cyberbullying, as evidenced by ( $\beta$  = 0.195, 0.343) and ( $p$  = 0.008, 0), respectively. Psychopathy was also positively related to turnover intention and cyberbullying, as evidenced by ( $\beta$  = 0.246, 0.299) and ( $p$  = 0, 0), respectively and later, cyberbullying is positively associated with the turnover intention of employees ( $\beta$  = 0.643;  $p$  = 0). Another hypothesis posited that the DTPT, i.e., machiavellianism, narcissism and psychopathy, would affect employees' mental health through the mediating role of cyberbullying. As stated in Table 3, machiavellianism was negatively related to the mental health of the employees, where beta value ( $\beta$ ) = 0.202 and path coefficients ( $p$ ) = 0, narcissism was also negatively associated with the mental health of employees ( $\beta$ ) = 0.277; ( $p$ ) = 0, and psychopathy was also negatively related with the mental health of employees ( $\beta$ ) = 0.297; ( $p$ ) = 0, and later, cyberbullying is negatively related with the mental health of employees ( $\beta$ ) = 0.708; ( $p$ ) = 0.

The indirect relationships of the exogenous variable on endogenous variable via a mediating variable are calculated in mediation analysis. Bootstrapping is the most recent mediation analysis approach, where an experiential representation of the distribution of the sample of the indirect effect is generated by using bootstrapping. The results shown in Table 5 indicate that cyberbullying mediates the relationship between DTPT, i.e., machiavellianism, narcissism, psychopathy and turnover intention, with obtained values being ( $\beta$  = 0.086, 0.221, 0.192), and ( $p$  = 0.011, 0, 0), respectively. Moreover, cyberbullying mediates the relationship between the DTPT, i.e. machiavellianism, narcissism, psychopathy, and employees' mental health, with obtained values being ( $\beta$  = 0.095, 0.243, 0.212) and ( $p$  = 0.013, 0, 0), respectively. These findings concluded that all study constructs fully mediated and significantly affected the relationships, and all hypotheses were supported.

## 5. Discussion

Employee turnover intention has become a crucial issue for organizations. According to a report published by the USA Bureau of Labor Statistics (2017), almost 5.4 million employees working in organizations quit their jobs due to voluntary employee turnover, bullying, and other reasons. Due to the pandemic outbreak, organizations have switched from offline to online working systems. They are more inclined towards ICT, substantially increasing the cyberbullying risk that enhances individuals' DTPT. This study aims to address how DTPT affects the mental health of the employee in the form of mental disorders, anxiety, burnout, stress etc. and leads towards turnover intention and how the turnover intention and mental health rate are affected due to cyberbullying. Data were collected from employees of the banking sector of Pakistan. Past research on precursors and outcomes of workplace cyberbullying is minimal and focused on examining its relationship with turnover intention and the employee's mental health. However present study added to a recent strand of literature by establishing a link between DTPT, cyberbullying, turnover intention and mental health at the workplace. Results showed that cyberbullying mediates the relationship between the DTPT, turnover intention, and employees' mental health. This study has four significant findings. First, it confirms the direct relationship between the DTPT and turnover intention. The prior literature supports all these findings.

Prior studies stated that an individual possessing characteristics of machiavellianism tries to deceive and manipulate their co-worker to achieve their interests and goals, increasing the tendency of co-workers to leave the company (Chung, 2021). Some studies proved that narcissistic individuals devalue others and are willing to exploit others to create deviant work behaviour that increases turnover intention. Khan, Niazi, et al. (2021) claim that psychopath individuals achieve their desired goals by displaying artificial charm and manipulation and using pawns to gain their way. They show less sympathy towards others, affecting their mental health, and they start looking for alternatives (Khan, Saleem, et al., 2021). Some studies proved that machiavellianism are more expected to employ counterproductive work behaviour (Dahling & Whitaker, 2008). In contrast, narcissists and psychopaths are accompanied by little agreeableness and less conscientiousness. They are more likely to affect workplace outcomes and have a positive association with turnover intention (Zettler et al., 2011). Further, it is also claimed that dark triad personalities exhibit deviant workplace behaviour and positively associate with turnover intention (Dearlove, 2003).

Second, the findings indicate that the mediating variables, i.e. cyberbullying, mediate the relationship between DTPT and turnover intention. The following result made the findings interesting as researchers focused on studying such deviant work behaviours (Treglown et al., 2018). Previous studies showed that individuals who exhibit DTPT encounter psychosocial expenditures because they lack self-control and empathy towards others, making them more vulnerable to cyberbullying. Hence, the following study is significant as it studied the mediating role of cyberbullying between DTPT and turnover intention (Privitera & Campbell, 2009). When employees are exposed to bullying, it affects how employees work, performance, work engagement, etc. They choose to quit the organization (Keskin et al., 2016). Scholars also show that dark personalities are utterly unsympathetic to the suffering or the rights of others and are more voluntary towards bullying behaviour than others, affecting the victim's well-being. They start looking for other job choices (Goodboy & Martin, 2015). Some researchers show that employees use cyberbullying to harass their colleagues and team members to exploit them (Hutchinson et al., 2006). It causes sadness, stress and sleeplessness and affects physical and persistent familiarity with such indicators raising turnover intention (Park & Choi, 2019).

Third, the DTPT negatively affects employees' mental health. Baughman et al. (2012) claimed that individuals with DTPT affect the mental health of employees they are working with by their conduct and behaviour. Still, its effect on mediating role of cyberbullying is not examined. Moreover, Mojsa-Kaja et al. (2021) showed a positive relationship between machiavellianism with stress and is negatively related to mental health. Literature showed a negative relationship



between machiavellianism with mental health, and it is positively associated with anxiety and depression (Lata & Chaudhary, 2021). The individuals who exhibit narcissistic characteristics are mentally tough and feel happy to see others feeling miserable and mentally struggling with difficulties which affect the mental health of their co-workers as well (Papageorgiou et al., 2019). Like past studies, our research findings also proved that psychopathy is the dark trait most closely associated with aggressive workplace behaviours for violating their rights and affecting the mental health of their colleagues (Neumann et al., 2007). Individuals high in psychopathy are exposed to bullying behaviour toward others. They do so with reduced empathic concern towards them, which affects the victim's mental health (Tokarev et al., 2017).

Fourthly, the concept which has made this research distinctive is testing the mediating role of cyberbullying between DTPT and employees' mental health. The victims of cyberbullying in their workplace reported mental and psychological agony, technostress and workplace exhaustion. Our research findings support the past research findings on cyberbullying along with more research contributions, particularly the relationship between cyberbullying and mental health was a distinct finding, thus contributing to the existing literature (Näsi et al., 2017). Some studies proved that DTPT is engaged in cyberbullying through their exploitativeness, higher impulsivity, ethical disentanglement and the gratification of others' travail (Goodboy & Martin, 2015). Consequently, it was predictable that dark traits desired to be associated with cyberbullying, affecting the victims' mental health through increased depression, burnout and anxiety (Kircaburun et al., 2019). The findings of the study also made significant theoretical and practical implications in the field of organizational behaviour.

### **5.1. Strengths and implications**

In this study, the workplace outcomes, such as the performance of employees due to mental health and turnover intention caused due to dark triad traits, are elaborated, which have significant implications for findings (Szabó et al., 2021). The contemporary study has numerous strengths. First, it is one of the earliest studies that examine the mediating role of cyberbullying between the DTPT and turnover intention and employees' mental health, which have never been investigated before. Second, cyberbullying would be measured by Cyberbullying: Screening of Peer Harassment scale (Machimbarrena & Garaigordobil, 2017) rather than NAQ-R Layman's criteria for traditional bullying (Iftikhar & Beh, 2019). Moreover, multiple items scale was used for accuracy and comprehensive identification of cyberbullying as encouraged by researchers (Safaria et al., 2020).

#### **5.1.1. Theoretical implications**

Primarily, from an academic point of view and to the best of our knowledge, this study is one of the first known research that scrutinizes the mediating role of cyberbullying between dark triad traits and turnover intention and the mediating role of cyberbullying on dark triad traits and mental health. Researchers have found that when employees attend specific training in interpersonal skills, the training can help them better cope with cyberbullying, empower their mental resources and increase their emotional intelligence and coping skills. The results of our study show that the small inimitable variance of dark traits is associated with negative workplace consequences (counterproductive work behaviour, corruption intent, turnover intention). Concerning the theoretic perspective, it is fascinating that machiavellianism was related to corruption intention, whereas psychopathy was associated with counterproductive work behaviour and corruptibility (Szabó et al., 2021). Our research finding supports by the literature where outcomes stated that personalities score extraordinarily on machiavellianism influenced others by ways of elusive, soft strategies. In contrast, those scoring high on psychopathy were not scared to employ more obvious means (i.e., brutal tactics) to accomplish their objectives (Johnson et al., 2015).

### 5.1.2. Practical implications

In today's world, employees are considered an essential asset for every organization, and most importantly, the success and failure of organizations depend on their performance. The current study helps the employees by providing awareness of cyberbullying and understanding the nature of bullying they are experiencing in their workplace. It has successfully related cyberbullying to mental health issues and turnover intention. These findings help the management to design and implement organizational strategies in a way that enables the employees to maintain their performance at the workplace and can control the turnover intention as well (Baloch, 2020). Secondly, the individuals who reported high scores for psychopathy are mostly expected to work in an adverse organizational environment where they experience cyberbullying. Therefore, organizations should focus on employee selection and assortment procedures to recognize those at the recruitment stage (Szabó et al., 2021). Moreover, Managers might use such outcomes to develop training and development plans for workers and frontrunners who can affect employee turnover intention. The HR managers can well recognize methods to train new employees, which would assist employees and associations and would support in identifying employees who possess DTPT for potential training. Lastly, an approach that might improve employee job satisfaction is to decrease negative sentiment through mindfulness training. Mindfulness theory suggests that mindfulness protects individuals from stress and enters them into a non-judgmental metacognitive state of awareness, where they can become open-minded to alternative perspectives and categories. For example, mindfulness-based training has been shown to reduce negative affect and improve an individual's physiological and psychological reactions to the stressor (Loh & Snyman, 2020). Hence, this study would benefit employees on how to apply such practices to increase job satisfaction while they face cyberbullying and other workplace issues.

### 6. Limitations and future directions

Besides these strengths, there are also some limitations to the current study. First, there is an uncharted association between the age of organizational executives, managers and employees and their ranks of the dark triad mental traits as dignified by the Short Dark Triad measure. Our study could not discover the association between age and DTPT. Nevertheless, it contributed to conveying this relationship to attention as a prospective direction for future research. It finds out the factors that can be exploited when exploring DTPT in employees and managers (Kananifar et al., 2019). Second, the employed self-report measures only revealed correlational and not causal relationships among the employees. Future researchers are suggested to study the causal relationship following context (Szabó et al., 2021). Third, it was restricted by its cross-sectional study design, and we cannot mark any causal claim. Therefore, scholars are suggested for longitudinal study in the future to recognize the growth and long-term significance of cyberbullying victimization at work (Näsi et al., 2017). Fourth, it explored the participants from the banking sector that might not be illustrative specific to the industry, instances of cyberbullying and associated outcomes. For example, the preceding study proved that traditional offline workplace bullying is more predominant in public industries than private ones (Hoel et al., 2001). However, we acknowledged that the diverse industries would present a limitation to study. That is why it is recommended that the initiation of online technologies has made bullying more informal among different industries. Therefore, cyberbullying is not limited to particular work classifications or industries, thus making it more vital to explore workplace cyberbullying among diverse industries and organizations (Loh & Snyman, 2020).

### 7. Conclusion

The current research study has elucidated how DTPT influence the mental health and turnover intention of employees in the banking sector. It further investigated the mediating role of cyberbullying between DTPT, turnover and mental health. The results supported our proposed hypothesis, concluding that cyberbullying fully mediates the relationship between DTPT and employees' turnover intention. Secondly, cyberbullying fully mediates the relationship between DTPT and employees' mental health, which is one of the contributions in the body of literature. However, the mediating role of cyberbullying is confirmed in the direct relationship

between DTPT and turnover intention and on its indirect path through the mental health of employees. The result outcomes would prove significant for organizational stakeholders and HR managers to devise policies that can help employees cope with mental health issues and minimize its consequences among employees, particularly in combatting the adverse effects of cyberbullying.

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