

Article

Perceived Dark Triad traits in supervisors and employee voice: A gender-moderated mediation model via emotional manipulation

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Abstract: This study aims to examine the relationship between perceived Dark Triad personality traits in supervisors and employee voice, as well as the mediating role of perceived emotional manipulation in this relationship and the moderating role of employee gender in the relationship between emotional manipulation and employee voice. Drawing on Trait Activation Theory and Social Exchange Theory, the proposed research model was tested using survey data collected from 326 employees working in private banks operating in Türkiye. The validity and reliability of the measurement model were assessed through confirmatory factor analysis, while the research hypotheses were tested using regression-based moderated mediation analysis and bootstrapping. The findings showed that perceived Dark Triad traits in supervisors were positively associated with perceived emotional manipulation. Both Dark Triad traits and emotional manipulation were found to be negatively associated with employee voice. Moreover, the relationship between emotional manipulation and employee voice differed significantly according to employee gender. Simple slope analysis revealed that the negative relationship between emotional manipulation and employee voice was significant and stronger among female employees, whereas it was not statistically significant among male employees. Similarly, the conditional indirect effect of Dark Triad traits on employee voice through emotional manipulation was significant among female employees but nonsignificant among male employees. The study suggests that emotional manipulation may represent an important interpersonal mechanism linking perceptions of supervisors' dark traits with employees' voluntary and constructive contributions, and that gender may constitute a boundary condition that differentiates the strength of this process.

Keywords: Dark Triad; emotional manipulation; employee voice; gender; moderated mediation

1. Introduction

Organizations' ability to adapt to environmental changes, identify errors in a timely manner, and improve work processes depends on employees sharing their knowledge, opinions, and suggestions with their supervisors. Conceptualized as employee voice, this behavior refers to employees' voluntary expression of ideas, concerns, and evaluations of organizational problems with the aim of improving organizational functioning (Detert & Burris, 2007; Morrison, 2011; Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). Voice, however, is not merely a constructive behavior that generates organizational benefits; because it involves questioning existing practices and, at times, criticizing managerial decisions, it may also entail interpersonal and career-related risks for employees (Burris, 2012; Morrison, 2014). Employees' decisions to speak up or remain silent therefore depend not only on the quality of the information and suggestions they possess, but also on their expectations regarding how their supervisors will respond to such views.

To explain the influence of managerial behavior on employee voice, attention

must be directed not only to the supportive, ethical, or participative aspects of leadership, but also to its dark side. Employees' perceptions of Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy in their supervisors may lead them to view those supervisors as self-interested, egocentric, low in empathy, manipulative, or unpredictable. Such evaluations have the potential to weaken employees' trust in their supervisors and their belief that they can safely express their views (Bueno-de la Fuente et al., 2025; Furnham et al., 2013; Rosendale et al., 2022). Emotional manipulation, which refers to supervisors' attempts to direct employees' emotions and perceptions toward their own goals, may constitute an important mechanism through which dark personality traits are translated into employee behavior (Austin et al., 2007; Burns et al., 2024; Hyde et al., 2020).

In this study, Dark Triad traits are examined not through supervisors' self-reports, but through employees' perceptions of these traits in their supervisors. Accordingly, the study focuses on employees' perceptions formed through daily interactions with their supervisors rather than on clinical or objective assessments of supervisors' personalities. This distinction is important because employees' evaluations of their supervisors' intentions, personalities, and likely reactions may shape their attitudes and behaviors regardless of the supervisors' actual characteristics. Conducting the study among employees of private banks provides a meaningful organizational context for examining these relationships because of the sector's intensive performance targets, pronounced hierarchical relationships, and the influence supervisors exert over employees' performance and career evaluations.

The theoretical logic of the study rests on two complementary explanatory frameworks. Trait Activation Theory proposes that personality traits become observable when situational cues encourage or allow the expression of behaviors associated with those traits (Tett & Burnett, 2003). Social Exchange Theory, in turn, suggests that employees may respond to the treatment they receive in their relationships with supervisors by increasing or limiting their voluntary contributions (Blau, 1964). Taken together, these perspectives allow the study to connect the behavioral expression of perceived dark supervisory traits with employees' decisions about whether to provide discretionary voice. This integration is particularly relevant because existing research provides limited direct evidence on how emotional manipulation may link perceptions of supervisors' dark traits with employee voice.

Within this theoretical framework, the study examines the relationship between perceived Dark Triad traits in supervisors and employee voice as part of a conditional process involving supervisors' emotionally manipulative behavior. On the one hand, it considers how dark personality traits may be reflected in employees' everyday experiences with their supervisors; on the other hand, it focuses on how these experiences shape employee voice as a voluntary and constructive form of contribution. Examining whether the relationship between emotional manipulation and employee voice differs according to employee gender also contributes to understanding for which employees this process may be more pronounced.

The Dark Triad refers to three socially undesirable personality traits, Machiavellianism, narcissism, and subclinical psychopathy, that do not necessarily reach the level of clinical disorders (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). Although conceptually distinct, these traits share characteristics such as emotional coldness, low empathy, an instrumental approach to interpersonal relationships, manipulation, and a tendency to use others for personal gain (Furnham et al., 2013; Jonason & Webster, 2010; Rosendale et al., 2022). This commonality does not mean that the traits are entirely identical; rather, it suggests that they are rooted in a similar dark core characterized by interpersonal antagonism and low

honesty-humility (Bueno-de la Fuente et al., 2025).

Machiavellianism, the first dimension of the Dark Triad, refers to a calculating, pragmatic, strategic, and self-interested approach to interpersonal relationships. Rather than building social relationships on mutual trust and commitment, Machiavellian individuals may view them as instruments for achieving their goals and may resort to deception, information control, and impression management in pursuit of long-term interests (Borisade, 2025). One of the key features distinguishing Machiavellianism from the other two traits is that manipulative behaviors are generally planned, controlled, and instrumental. Machiavellian behavior therefore does not always take the form of overt aggression; apparently cooperative, measured, or professional conduct may conceal a strategic calculation of personal gain (Rosendale et al., 2022).

Narcissism is characterized by an inflated sense of self-importance, perceptions of superiority, entitlement, and a need for admiration from others (Bueno-de la Fuente et al., 2025). Although supervisors with narcissistic traits may initially be perceived as confident, charismatic, and impressive, over time they may prioritize their own status, achievements, and positive self-image over the interests of their teams. Their tendency to respond defensively when confronted with criticism or information that threatens their self-concept may lead them to interpret employees' opinions and objections as threats to their personal authority (Fast et al., 2014; Liao et al., 2019).

Psychopathy encompasses characteristics such as low empathy, emotional coldness, lack of remorse, impulsivity, and insensitivity to harm inflicted on others (Borisade, 2025; Furnham et al., 2013). In contrast to the controlled and long-term strategies associated with Machiavellianism, psychopathic tendencies are more closely linked to impulsive, risky, and directly harmful behaviors. Psychopathy is therefore regarded as one of the Dark Triad dimensions associated with more destructive consequences for interpersonal harmony and organizational order (Carter et al., 2024; Furnham et al., 2013). Nevertheless, all three traits may manifest in different forms of behavior depending on the context, the individual's position, and organizational control mechanisms.

The growing prominence of Dark Triad traits in the organizational behavior literature stems from their associations with leadership, perceptions of organizational politics, counterproductive work behaviors, and employee relations (Baloch et al., 2017; Linstead et al., 2014). The self-confidence, persuasiveness, impression-management skills, and self-promotional abilities of individuals with dark personality traits may lead them to be perceived as impressive or as possessing strong leadership potential, particularly during initial encounters (Furnham et al., 2013; Rosendale et al., 2022). Over time, however, these traits have been associated with the neglect of employee needs, ethically problematic decisions, conflict, and counterproductive behavior (Baloch et al., 2017; Borisade, 2025; Carter et al., 2024). Evidence linking Dark Triad traits to broader indicators of employee well-being, such as life satisfaction and work–family experiences, further suggests that their consequences are not limited to direct job performance (Çelik et al., 2026).

Nevertheless, supervisors' actual possession of Dark Triad traits and employees' perceptions of such traits are not equivalent. The present study does not assume that employees can objectively diagnose their supervisors' personality structures; rather, it focuses on how employees interpret supervisory behaviors as manipulative, egocentric, low in empathy, or self-interested. Because supervisors may strategically manage the impressions they convey in everyday interactions, employees' perceptions should not be treated as direct indicators of supervisors' underlying personality traits (Curtis et al., 2023). Instead, perceived Dark Triad traits are conceptualized here as an organizationally relevant perceptual reality that

may shape employees' expectations of supervisory reactions and their subsequent workplace behavior.

According to Trait Activation Theory, personality traits are expressed in behavior when situational cues make the enactment of trait-relevant behaviors possible, meaningful, or rewarding (Tett & Burnett, 2003). Within organizational contexts, power asymmetry, intense performance pressure, a competitive climate, limited accountability, and relational conditions that provide scope for manipulative conduct may strengthen the behavioral expression of dark personality traits (Czopek, 2026). Recent research similarly suggests that performance- and competition-oriented climates, as well as organizational environments perceived as deceptive or untrustworthy, may influence how dark traits manifest in the workplace. Curtis and Jones demonstrated that the behavioral expression of dark traits may take two distinct motivational forms: indifference, characterized by emotional detachment and a lack of concern for others' well-being, and hostility, characterized by active antagonism and the deliberate infliction of harm. Whether dark personality traits are translated into one of these two behavioral pathways may depend on the strength of situational cues and the presence of regulatory mechanisms within the work environment (Curtis & Jones, 2020). Because these organizational conditions were not directly measured in the present study, however, the hierarchical and target-oriented structure of private banking is treated not as an empirically established variable that activates dark traits, but as a theoretical context in which such traits may become behaviorally observable.

Within this framework, emotional manipulation may be regarded as one of the behavioral forms through which employees experience perceived Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy in their supervisors in everyday organizational life. The interpersonal instrumentality, low empathy, and self-interest orientation underlying the common core of the Dark Triad may create conditions in which employees' emotions and perceptions are used to advance supervisors' goals. Emotional manipulation may therefore represent an important interpersonal manifestation of perceived dark supervisory traits in employees' everyday interactions.

Emotional manipulation refers to an individual's attempt to direct another person's emotions, thoughts, or behavior toward the manipulator's own goals (Austin et al., 2007; Hyde & Grieve, 2018). The concept is based on the premise that the capacity to recognize and influence others' emotions is not used solely for supportive or prosocial purposes. Emotional manipulation is therefore regarded as one of the dark sides of emotional intelligence. An individual who accurately understands others' emotional states may use this knowledge for the benefit of the other person, but may also employ it to pursue personal interests, gain power, or control behavior (Austin et al., 2007; Hyde et al., 2020; Ngoc et al., 2020).

Research on the measurement of emotion-management behaviors directed toward others indicates that emotional influence is not a uniform process; alongside supportive, constructive, and prosocial strategies, it may also involve darker strategies such as belittling, worsening others' emotions, faking, and directing their responses (Austin & O'Donnell, 2013; Austin et al., 2014). Not every attempt to influence another person's emotions should therefore be classified as emotional manipulation. Persuasion, emotional support, feedback, and efforts to enhance employee motivation may be carried out openly, reciprocally, and in alignment with organizational goals. Emotional manipulation, by contrast, generally involves influence that serves the manipulator's interests rather than those of the target, conceals its underlying intention, and exploits the target's emotional vulnerabilities (Hyde & Grieve, 2018; Krause, 2012).

Supervisor–employee relationships may involve power asymmetries

conducive to emotional manipulation because supervisors influence employees' performance, duties, rewards, and career opportunities. Supervisors may direct employee behavior by exploiting employees' fear, guilt, anxiety, need for belonging, desire for approval, or need for appreciation. For example, exaggerated displays of anger, the conditional provision of praise and attention, statements that undermine an employee's self-confidence, or the instrumental use of emotional closeness may become strategies for influencing employee decisions and behavior (Austin et al., 2014; Hyde & Grieve, 2018; Hyde et al., 2020). Because leaders and supervisors play an important role in shaping employees' workplace emotions, managerial behavior must be evaluated not only in terms of task performance, but also in relation to employees' emotional experiences (Bono et al., 2007).

Although emotional manipulation is related to concepts such as gaslighting, mobbing, psychological violence, and abusive supervision, it is not identical to them. Gaslighting is a more specific form of manipulation that causes targets to question their own perceptions, memories, or assessments of reality (Korkut & Yurek, 2026). Mobbing and psychological violence, by contrast, generally involve repeated, systematic, and overtly harmful behavior (Leymann, 1996). Compared with these behaviors, emotional manipulation may occur in more subtle, everyday, and difficult-to-detect forms and may sometimes operate through apparently positive behaviors such as false kindness, ingratiation, excessive attention, or conditional praise (Hyde & Grieve, 2018). Similarly, whereas abusive supervision refers to employees' perceptions of supervisors' sustained hostile verbal and nonverbal behavior (Tepper, 2000), emotional manipulation also encompasses behaviors that do not involve direct aggression but strategically shape employees' emotional responses. These conceptual distinctions require findings from the abusive supervision and workplace bullying literatures to be treated as closely related and supportive evidence rather than as direct evidence of emotional manipulation.

Organizational and relational conditions may influence the emergence and persistence of manipulative supervisory behavior. Concentrated power, limited transparency, and restricted opportunities to challenge managerial decisions may make such behavior more difficult to detect or constrain (Korkut & Yurek, 2026). Related research on abusive supervision further suggests that negative managerial behavior may be shaped by supervisors' emotional exhaustion, employee performance evaluations, self-monitoring, and supervisor–employee conflict (Lam et al., 2017; Tepper et al., 2011). Although these studies do not directly assess emotional manipulation, they indicate that negative supervisory behavior reflects both individual and contextual influences.

Exposure to emotional manipulation has been associated with loss of trust, negative emotions, and relational deterioration (Krause, 2012). Related research on abusive supervision, workplace bullying, and other destructive interpersonal behaviors has linked such experiences to psychological distress, emotional exhaustion, withdrawal, and broader relational consequences extending to coworkers and family life (Chu, 2014; Giorgi et al., 2016; Hoobler & Brass, 2006; Wheeler et al., 2013; Wu & Hu, 2009). Because these studies examine related but distinct forms of negative supervisory behavior, they are treated here as supportive rather than direct evidence regarding emotional manipulation.

Dark Triad traits are closely associated with emotional manipulation because they involve tendencies to use interpersonal relationships instrumentally and direct others toward personal goals. Nevertheless, Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy may give rise to emotional manipulation through different motives. Strategic self-interest is prominent in Machiavellianism, the protection of self-image and status in narcissism, and low empathy and lack of remorse in psychopathy (Furnham et al., 2013; Hyde et al., 2020).

Research directly examining the relationship between emotional manipulation and employee voice remains limited. Nevertheless, manipulative supervisory behavior may create distrust, fear, and perceptions of interpersonal risk among employees, thereby influencing their decisions to express organizational concerns and suggestions. To evaluate this relationship, it is therefore necessary to explain the concept of employee voice.

The conceptual roots of employee voice can be traced to Hirschman's framework, which proposes that individuals may respond to organizational decline through exit, voice, or loyalty (Hirschman, 1970). In the organizational behavior literature, the concept has subsequently evolved to refer to employees' voluntary expression of ideas, suggestions, concerns, and criticisms aimed at improving work processes, units, or organizational functioning (Detert & Burris, 2007; Morrison, 2011; Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). The key feature distinguishing voice from ordinary organizational communication is its constructive intent to change or improve the status quo. Accordingly, merely providing information as part of one's formal duties, responding to a supervisor's question, or participating in everyday conversations does not, in itself, constitute employee voice.

Employee voice is generally regarded as an extra-role and discretionary behavior (Mowbray et al., 2015; Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). However, the literature offers different perspectives on the scope of the concept and the types of behavior that should be classified as voice. Van Dyne et al. (2003) categorized voice according to employees' underlying motives as prosocial, defensive, and acquiescent voice. Prosocial voice involves expressing ideas with the intention of benefiting the organization or coworkers; defensive voice refers to speaking up for self-protective purposes; and acquiescent voice involves the use of more passive and resigned expressions based on the belief that existing conditions are unlikely to change.

Liang et al. (2012) distinguished between promotive and prohibitive voice according to content. Promotive voice encompasses new ideas and suggestions intended to improve the organization's future functioning, whereas prohibitive voice draws attention to existing problems, errors, and potential harm. Maynes and Podsakoff (2014), in turn, conceptualized voice behavior within a broader framework comprising supportive, constructive, defensive, and destructive forms. These classifications are not dimensions of a single theoretical model, but alternative approaches developed on the basis of different criteria, including the motive, content, and change orientation of voice (Ashfan et al., 2024; Chamberlin et al., 2017).

Although employee voice and employee silence are closely related, they should not be treated as exact opposites. Employee silence refers to the deliberate withholding of information, opinions, or concerns that may be important to the organization (Morrison & Milliken, 2000). A low level of voice, however, does not necessarily mean that an employee is consciously withholding information. An employee may have no relevant idea to express, may be indifferent to the issue, or may share views through a different channel, all of which may also result in low observed voice. Voice and silence are therefore regarded as related but distinct behaviors shaped by different motives and regulatory processes (Morrison, 2011, 2014; Pfrombeck et al., 2022).

Voice also differs from concepts such as complaining, whistleblowing, and issue selling in terms of its scope and orientation. Complaining generally focuses on expressing dissatisfaction or a negative experience, whereas employee voice may be directed toward constructive change. Whistleblowing may involve disclosing information about ethical or legal violations, often to parties outside the organization. Issue selling, by contrast, is a more strategic process focused on bringing a particular concern to the attention of senior management (Morrison,

2011). These conceptual distinctions indicate that voice should be evaluated not merely as the act of speaking, but in relation to the purpose, content, target, and organizational context of the behavior.

Individual, managerial, and organizational factors jointly contribute to the emergence of employee voice (Chamberlin et al., 2017; Morrison, 2014). Although individual characteristics may influence employees' tendency to speak up, employees also assess whether their supervisors are open to input and whether expressing their views is likely to be both useful and safe. Managerial openness, ethical leadership, and psychological safety therefore represent important conditions for employee voice (Detert & Burris, 2007; Edmondson, 1999; Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009).

These considerations are particularly salient in hierarchical relationships. Employees may perceive voice directed toward higher-status supervisors as carrying greater interpersonal risk, especially in contexts characterized by high power distance or when supervisors respond defensively to criticism (Botero & Van Dyne, 2009; Burris, 2012; Fast et al., 2014; Pfrombeck et al., 2022). Trust in the supervisor and expectations regarding supervisory responses therefore remain central to employees' decisions to speak up (Morrison, 2014).

1.1. Hypothesis development

Employee voice is a constructive behavior that enables organizations to identify problems at an early stage, improve decision-making processes, and benefit from employees' knowledge and suggestions; nevertheless, it also entails certain interpersonal and career-related risks for employees. Before expressing their views, employees assess not only whether the information they intend to share is useful, but also how their supervisors are likely to respond and what consequences speaking up may have for them (Burris, 2012; Morrison, 2014; Pfrombeck et al., 2022). Employees' perceptions of their supervisors therefore play an important role in shaping their decisions to engage in voice.

Perceived Dark Triad traits in supervisors may lead employees to assess the potential risks of speaking up as greater. Machiavellian supervisors' tendency to approach interpersonal relationships instrumentally and in a self-interested manner may heighten employees' concerns that their views could be used against them (Austin et al., 2007; Furnham et al., 2013). Narcissistic supervisors' defensiveness in response to criticism and their tendency to perceive employee input as a threat to their competence or authority may likewise reduce employees' willingness to speak up (Fast et al., 2014; Liao et al., 2019). Low empathy, emotional coldness, and insensitivity to the harm that others may experience, which are associated with psychopathic traits, may lead employees to expect punitive or unpredictable responses following voice behavior (Carter et al., 2024; Furnham et al., 2013). Employees who perceive their supervisors as manipulative, egocentric, low in empathy, or self-interested are therefore expected to be more reluctant to express their ideas, suggestions, and concerns. From the perspective of Social Exchange Theory, the supervisor–employee relationship can be viewed as an exchange relationship sustained through expectations of mutual trust, respect, and obligation. Rather than being a mandatory task behavior, employee voice constitutes a voluntary and constructive contribution to the organization (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). Perceiving one's supervisor as self-interested, unpredictable, or inclined to use employees for personal purposes may undermine the trust and reciprocity underlying this exchange relationship (O'Boyle et al., 2012). Under hierarchical conditions in which direct confrontation with supervisors is risky, employees may respond to negative supervisory treatment by limiting voluntary contributions such as voice (Blau, 1964; Morrison, 2014). This theoretical reasoning supports the expectation that perceived Dark Triad traits in supervisors will be negatively

associated with employee voice.

H₁: Perceived Dark Triad personality traits in supervisors are negatively associated with employee voice.

One common feature of Dark Triad traits is the tendency to direct others toward personal goals and to use interpersonal relationships instrumentally (Furnham et al., 2013; Jonason & Webster, 2010). Nevertheless, the three dimensions may differ in the motives underlying manipulation and in the methods employed. Owing to its planned and strategic nature, Machiavellianism is among the dimensions most directly associated with emotional manipulation. Machiavellian individuals may observe others' emotional reactions and use them to pursue their long-term interests (Austin et al., 2007; Burns et al., 2024). Supervisors with narcissistic traits may direct employees' emotions to preserve their sense of superiority, create favorable impressions, and satisfy their need for admiration. Psychopathic traits may also facilitate the disregard of emotional harm to others because of low empathy and a lack of remorse (Furnham et al., 2013).

Research examining the relationship between Dark Triad traits and emotional manipulation indicates that these traits are associated with darker strategies for managing others' emotions (Austin et al., 2014; Hyde et al., 2020). Emotional manipulation has also been identified as a potential explanatory mechanism in the relationship between Machiavellianism and counterproductive work behavior (Burns et al., 2024). Studies directly examining Dark Triad leadership and emotional manipulation similarly suggest that employees who perceive higher levels of dark personality traits in their supervisors may also perceive those supervisors as engaging in greater emotional manipulation (Luthfiyah & Parahyanti, 2025). These findings are consistent with Trait Activation Theory, which proposes that dark personality traits may be expressed behaviorally through emotional manipulation (Czopek, 2026; Tett & Burnett, 2003). Employees' perceptions of higher levels of Dark Triad traits in their supervisors are therefore expected to be positively associated with their perceptions of those supervisors' emotional manipulation.

H₂: Perceived Dark Triad personality traits in supervisors are positively associated with perceived emotional manipulation.

Supervisory openness to employee input, trust in the supervisor, and employees' evaluations of whether speaking up will lead to adverse consequences play important roles in the emergence of employee voice (Detert & Burris, 2007; Morrison, 2014). Emotional manipulation may involve directing employees' behavior by exploiting emotional reactions such as fear, guilt, anxiety, the need for approval, or self-doubt (Austin et al., 2014; Hyde & Grieve, 2018). Such behavior may make it more difficult for employees to determine their supervisors' intentions and may weaken their trust in those supervisors.

Findings concerning emotional manipulation and closely related concepts suggest that such behavior may lead employees to perceive the interpersonal costs of speaking up as greater by generating outcomes such as loss of trust, psychological distress, and withdrawal (Chu, 2014; Giorgi et al., 2016; Krause, 2012; Wu & Hu, 2009). Employees who are unable to predict their supervisors' reactions or who believe that their views may be distorted or used against them can be expected to become more reluctant to express their ideas and concerns. Social Exchange Theory explains this expectation through the balance of reciprocity within the supervisor–employee relationship. When a supervisor uses an employee's emotional vulnerabilities to pursue personal goals, the relationship may move away from a foundation of mutual trust, respect, and fairness. Under conditions in which directly responding to the supervisor is risky,

employees may react by limiting the voluntary contributions they provide to the organization and the supervisor. Because employee voice is a discretionary and extra-role contribution, employees' willingness to express ideas, suggestions, and concerns is expected to decline as their perceptions of supervisors' emotionally manipulative behavior increase (Blau, 1964; Van Dyne & LePine, 1998).

H₃: Perceived emotional manipulation by the supervisor is negatively associated with employee voice.

The relationship between emotional manipulation and employee voice may not be equally strong for all employees. Individuals differ in how they perceive and interpret emotional cues and respond to manipulative methods used in interpersonal relationships. Studies of emotional manipulation in the workplace suggest that gender may represent an important boundary condition in relation to both the use of manipulative behavior and the processes associated with such behavior (Hyde et al., 2020; Luthfiyah & Parahyanti, 2025). However, the existing literature does not provide sufficiently consistent or direct evidence concerning whether the negative relationship between emotional manipulation and employee voice is stronger for one gender than the other. The hypothesis concerning the moderating role of gender was therefore formulated without specifying a direction.

H₄: The strength of the relationship between perceived emotional manipulation by the supervisor and employee voice differs according to employee gender.

When Trait Activation Theory and Social Exchange Theory are considered together, perceived Dark Triad traits in supervisors are expected to reduce employee voice through emotional manipulation. As proposed in H₄, when the strength of the relationship between emotional manipulation and employee voice varies by employee gender, the magnitude of the indirect effect will likewise differ between female and male employees. Gender is therefore regarded as a boundary condition that may cause this conditional indirect process to emerge with varying strength across employees.

H₅: The conditional indirect effect of perceived Dark Triad personality traits in supervisors on employee voice through emotional manipulation differs according to employee gender.

The research model developed on this basis is presented in **Figure 1**.

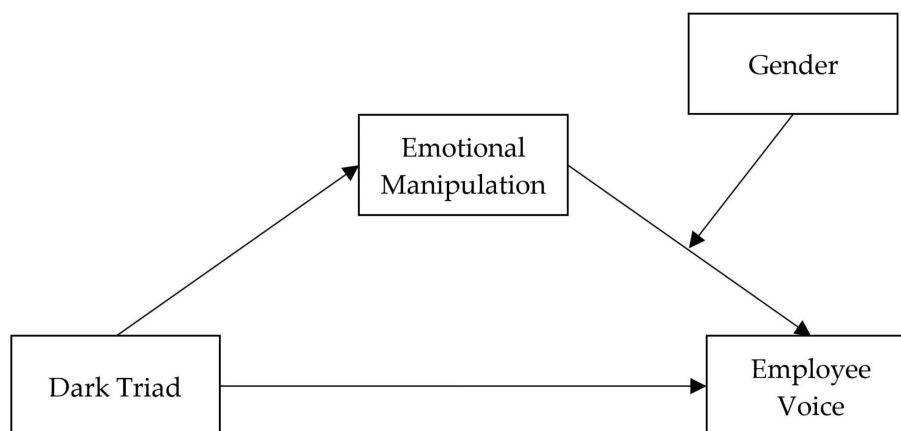


Figure 1. Research model

2. Materials and methods

This section describes the study sample and data collection process, the measurement instruments used, and the procedures followed in data analysis.

It also provides information on the statistical analyses conducted to assess the validity and reliability of the measurement model and to test the research hypotheses.

2.1. Sample and data collection procedure

The study sample consisted of employees working in private banks operating in Türkiye. The banking sector provides an appropriate research context for examining the relationships among perceived Dark Triad traits in supervisors, emotional manipulation, and employee voice because it is characterized by intensive interpersonal interaction, high performance pressure, a pronounced hierarchical structure, and continuous communication between employees and their supervisors.

Data were collected from private bank employees between January and February 2026 through both online and face-to-face surveys. For the face-to-face component, employees were approached directly at bank branches, whereas the online questionnaire was shared electronically with private bank employees. A total of 335 questionnaires were obtained. To enhance data quality, an attention-check item was included in the survey, and the responses of nine participants who failed this check were excluded from the analysis. The final sample therefore consisted of 326 bank employees.

Reporting bank affiliation was optional to reduce concerns about identifiability. Among participants who provided this information, eight different private banks were represented; however, because most participants did not report their bank affiliation, the exact number of banks represented in the full sample could not be determined. Branch- and supervisor-level identifiers were not collected because requesting such detailed organizational identifiers in a study involving sensitive evaluations of direct supervisors could have increased participants' concerns about identifiability and potentially affected the candor of their responses. Consequently, the exact number of branches and supervisors represented in the sample could not be determined, nor was it possible to establish whether multiple respondents evaluated the same supervisor. Accordingly, potential clustering of responses at the branch or supervisor level could not be directly assessed.

Of the final sample, 53.4% were male and 46.6% were female. Regarding educational attainment, 79.1% of the participants held a bachelor's degree, 16.0% held a postgraduate degree, and 4.9% were high school graduates. The participants' mean age was 34.8 years ($SD = 7.1$), and their average tenure in the banking sector was 8.7 years ($SD = 5.9$).

Ethical approval for the study was granted by the Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee of Isparta University of Applied Sciences through its decision dated May 9, 2025, and numbered 213/06. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, that participation was voluntary, and that the data obtained would be used solely for scientific purposes.

2.2. Measurement instruments

The study variables were measured using scales whose validity and reliability had previously been established. All items were rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree).

For the Dark Triad and emotional manipulation measures, the original self-report referent was shifted so that participants evaluated their direct supervisors. No major changes were made to the substantive content of the items; the adaptation primarily involved adding "My supervisor" to the item wording. Prior to the main data collection, the referent-shifted items were reviewed by six experts for clarity, appropriateness, and consistency with the meaning of the original items. All six experts considered the revised wording appropriate.

The adapted measures were subsequently pilot-tested with 34 participants, and the pilot results supported their suitability for use in the main study. This observer-based approach was adopted because the present model focuses on employees' perceptions of supervisory characteristics and behaviors, which may shape their expectations of supervisory reactions and their workplace responses regardless of supervisors' actual characteristics.

Dark Triad Scale: Dark Triad personality traits were measured using the scale developed by Jonason and Webster (2010) and adapted into Turkish by Toplu Yaşlıoğlu and Atılğan (2018). The scale comprises 12 items across three dimensions: Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy. In the Turkish adaptation study, the reliability coefficient was reported as .88 for the overall scale and as .84, .82, and .78 for Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy, respectively. For the main analyses, an overall Dark Triad score was calculated as the mean of all 12 items. Because each of the three dimensions was represented by four items, the dimensions contributed equally to the overall composite. The overall score was used to provide a composite index of the characteristics shared across the three Dark Triad dimensions in the primary model, while dimension-specific analyses were also conducted to preserve and examine the conceptual distinctiveness of Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy. A sample item is: "My supervisor may use people to achieve their own goals."

Emotional Manipulation Scale: Emotional manipulation was measured using the scale developed by Austin et al. (2007) and adapted into Turkish by Aydemir (2021). The scale has a unidimensional structure and consists of 10 items. The reliability coefficient was reported as .93 in the Turkish adaptation study. A sample item is: "My supervisor may lavish people with praise to make a favorable impression on them."

Employee Voice Scale: Employee voice was measured using the scale developed by Van Dyne and LePine (1998) and adapted into Turkish by Arslan and Yener (2016). The scale has a unidimensional structure and consists of six items. The reliability coefficient was reported as .76 in the Turkish adaptation study. The scale assesses participants' tendency to express their ideas and opinions regarding work processes. A sample item is: "I feel comfortable expressing my ideas to my supervisors about how work can be done more effectively in this workplace."

2.3. Data analysis

The data were analyzed using the R statistical software. First, the internal consistency of the scales was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficients, and the validity and reliability of the measurement model were tested through confirmatory factor analysis. Convergent validity was evaluated using composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE), whereas discriminant validity was assessed using the heterotrait–monotrait ratio (HTMT). Common method bias was examined using Harman's single-factor test, and multicollinearity was assessed through variance inflation factor (VIF) values.

To test the research hypotheses, a regression-based moderated mediation analysis was conducted following the descriptive statistics and correlation analyses. Gender was coded as 0 = female and 1 = male. Prior to the regression analyses, the overall Dark Triad and emotional manipulation scores were mean-centered. The interaction term was computed as the product of the mean-centered emotional manipulation score and gender. For the dimension-specific analyses, Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and narcissism scores were likewise mean-centered. The indirect effects and the index of moderated mediation were evaluated using 95% confidence intervals based on 5,000 bootstrap resamples. A simple slope analysis was also conducted to

examine the nature of the significant interaction effect.

3. Results

A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to assess the validity and reliability of the measurement model. The resulting goodness-of-fit indices indicated that the measurement model demonstrated an acceptable fit ($\chi^2/df = 2.85$; $CFI = .94$; $NFI = .91$; $TLI = .93$; $GFI = .89$; $AGFI = .86$; $RMSEA = .07$). In addition, all standardized factor loadings exceeded the recommended threshold of .50 and ranged from .54 to .83. These findings indicate that the measurement model possesses adequate construct validity (Byrne, 2016; Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kline, 2011; Schermelleh-Engel et al., 2003).

HTMT values were also examined to assess discriminant validity among the study variables, and all values were found to be below the recommended threshold of .85 (Henseler et al., 2015). Harman's single-factor test was conducted to evaluate the risk of common method bias, and the single factor accounted for 21.76% of the total variance. The relatively low proportion of variance accounted for by a single factor suggests that no dominant single-factor structure was evident; however, Harman's single-factor test alone cannot rule out the possibility of common method effects (Podsakoff et al., 2003). In addition, all VIF values for the regression models were below 2.42, indicating the absence of multicollinearity concerns (Hair et al., 2019).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics, reliability, validity and intercorrelations.

Variables	Mean	SD	CR	AVE	1	2	3	4	5
1. Machiavellianism	3.18	0.95	.81	.52	(.76)				
2. Psychopathy	2.96	0.92	.74	.49	.24***	(.70)			
3. Narcissism	2.71	0.94	.82	.53	.25***	.16**	(.75)		
4. Emotional Manipulation	3.24	0.89	.89	.50	.32***	.29***	.18**	(.87)	
5. Employee Voice	3.11	0.95	.87	.53	-.22***	-.17**	-.19***	-.30***	(.84)

Notes: $N = 326$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; The values in parentheses indicate Cronbach's alpha coefficients.

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics, reliability and validity findings, and correlation coefficients for the study variables. The variable means ranged from 2.71 to 3.24. Emotional manipulation had the highest mean, whereas narcissism had the lowest.

An examination of the reliability coefficients showed that Cronbach's alpha values ranged from .70 to .87, while composite reliability values ranged from .74 to .89. These findings indicate that the measures demonstrated acceptable levels of internal consistency. AVE values ranged from .49 to .53, suggesting that the constructs generally exhibited acceptable convergent validity. Although the AVE value for the psychopathy dimension (.49) was slightly below the recommended threshold of .50, the construct was retained in the analyses because its composite reliability value exceeded .70 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2019).

The correlation analysis indicated that employees' perceptions of Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and narcissism in their supervisors were positively and significantly related both to one another and to emotional manipulation. In contrast, Machiavellianism ($r = -.22, p < .001$), psychopathy ($r = -.17, p < .01$), narcissism ($r = -.19, p < .001$), and emotional manipulation ($r = -.30, p < .001$) were negatively and significantly associated with employee voice. These findings are generally consistent with the relationships proposed in the research model.

Table 2. Regression analysis results for the moderated mediation model.

Variables	Mediator Model (Emotional Manipulation)		Outcome Model (Employee Voice)	
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>
Constant	3.23***	.067	3.09***	.072
Moderator Variable				
Gender	.023	.091	.033	.098
Independent Variable				
Dark Triad	.520***	.070	−.263**	.082
Mediator Variable				
Emotional Manipulation	—	—	−.411***	.086
Interaction Term				
Emotional Manipulation × Gender	—	—	.308**	.111
R^2	.146		.145	

Notes: $N = 326$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table 2 presents the regression analysis results for the moderated mediation model. The results of the mediator model indicate that perceived Dark Triad traits in supervisors are positively and significantly associated with emotional manipulation ($B = .520$, $p < .001$). Accordingly, employees who perceive higher levels of Dark Triad traits in their supervisors also evaluate those supervisors as displaying higher levels of emotional manipulation.

In the outcome model, perceived Dark Triad traits in supervisors are negatively and significantly associated with employee voice ($B = −.263$, $p < .01$). Emotional manipulation is also negatively and significantly associated with employee voice ($B = −.411$, $p < .001$). This finding indicates that employees who perceive higher levels of emotional manipulation in their supervisors are less likely to express their ideas and opinions.

The significant Emotional Manipulation × Gender interaction term ($B = .308$, $p < .01$) indicates that the relationship between perceived emotional manipulation by the supervisor and employee voice differs according to employee gender. In other words, gender plays a moderating role in this relationship. Accordingly, H_1 , H_2 , H_3 and H_4 were supported.

Table 3. Conditional indirect effects and index of moderated mediation.

Variables	Female ($n = 152$)		Male ($n = 174$)		Moderated Mediation	
	Indirect Effect	95% CI	Indirect Effect	95% CI	Index	95% CI
Overall Model	−.214	[−.321, −.118]	−.054	[−.144, .037]	.160	[.044, .295]
Machiavellianism	−.137	[−.205, −.077]	−.033	[−.086, .020]	.104	[.035, .185]
Psychopathy	−.132	[−.204, −.072]	−.039	[−.091, .009]	.093	[.028, .175]
Narcissism	−.080	[−.138, −.029]	−.026	[−.063, .003]	.055	[.011, .112]

Notes: $N = 326$.

Table 3 presents the bootstrap results for the conditional indirect effects and the index of moderated mediation. For the overall model, the indirect effect of perceived Dark Triad traits in supervisors on employee voice through emotional manipulation was significant among female employees (effect = −.214, 95% CI [−.321, −.118]). In contrast, the indirect effect calculated for male employees was not statistically significant (effect = −.054, 95% CI [−.144, .037]).

At the dimensional level, the indirect effects of Machiavellianism,

psychopathy, and narcissism on employee voice through emotional manipulation were significant among female employees. Among male employees, however, the indirect effects were not significant for any of the three dimensions.

The significant index of moderated mediation for the overall model (index = .160, 95% CI [.044, .295]) indicates that the indirect effect of perceived Dark Triad traits in supervisors on employee voice through emotional manipulation differed significantly according to employee gender. Similarly, the indices of moderated mediation were significant for Machiavellianism (index = .104, 95% CI [.035, .185]), psychopathy (index = .093, 95% CI [.028, .175]), and narcissism (index = .055, 95% CI [.011, .112]). Accordingly, H_5 was supported. The results of the simple slope analysis conducted to examine the nature of the interaction effect in greater detail are presented in **Figure 2**.

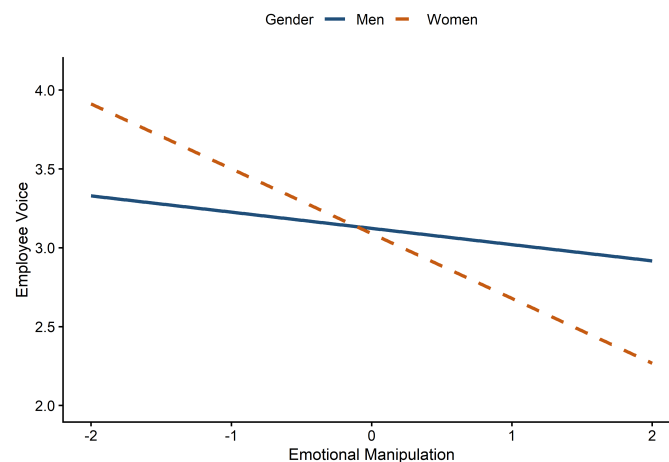


Figure 2. The moderating role of gender in the relationship between emotional manipulation and employee voice.

The simple slope analysis showed that the negative relationship between perceived emotional manipulation by the supervisor and employee voice was significant and stronger among female employees ($B = -.411$, 95% CI $[-.580, -.242]$). In contrast, although the relationship was negative among male employees, it was not statistically significant ($B = -.103$, 95% CI $[-.256, .050]$). As shown in **Figure 2**, employee voice declined markedly among female employees who perceived higher levels of emotional manipulation in their supervisors, whereas the corresponding relationship among male employees was weak and statistically nonsignificant.

4. Discussion

This study examined the relationships among perceived Dark Triad personality traits in supervisors, emotional manipulation, and employee voice within a conditional process model. The findings showed that employees who perceived higher levels of Dark Triad traits in their supervisors reported lower levels of employee voice and evaluated their supervisors as engaging in greater emotional manipulation. Perceived emotional manipulation by the supervisor was also found to be negatively associated with employee voice. One of the study's most noteworthy findings was that the relationship between emotional manipulation and employee voice differed according to employee gender and that the indirect effect of the Dark Triad on employee voice through emotional manipulation was significant among female employees but not among male employees. These findings suggest that employees' decisions to engage in voice are related not only to their general evaluations of their supervisors' personality traits, but also to how those traits are reflected in everyday supervisor–employee interactions.

Perceived Dark Triad traits in supervisors were negatively associated with employee voice. This result is consistent with studies indicating that employee voice is not merely a constructive behavior aimed at generating organizational benefits, but also entails significant interpersonal and career-related risks for employees (Burris, 2012; Morrison, 2014). In addition to assessing the value of the ideas or information they possess, employees also consider how their supervisors are likely to respond to those views. Perceiving a supervisor as self-interested, egocentric, low in empathy, or unpredictable may lead employees to assess the potential costs of speaking up as greater. Particularly in hierarchical work environments where supervisors influence employees' duties, performance, and careers, criticism of or objection to a supervisor may become a riskier form of behavior for employees.

Each dimension of the Dark Triad may influence employees' voice decisions through a different form of interpersonal risk. The strategic self-interest and instrumental use of interpersonal relationships associated with Machiavellianism may lead employees to believe that the information they share could later be used against them. Narcissistic supervisors' tendency to perceive criticism as a threat to their self-image and authority may cause even constructive employee input to be met with negative or defensive reactions (Fast et al., 2014; Liao et al., 2019). Low empathy, emotional coldness, and insensitivity to the harm experienced by others, which are associated with psychopathic traits, may make supervisors' possible reactions appear more unpredictable from the employees' perspective (Carter et al., 2024; Furnham et al., 2013). These trait-specific patterns are consistent with Curtis et al.'s (2026) finding that the Dark Triad dimensions differ in their associations with wrongness admission: psychopathy was associated with lower willingness and less frequent admission, Machiavellianism was primarily associated with concerns about the reputational consequences of admitting error, and narcissism was associated with greater self-reported willingness without a corresponding increase in actual admission in daily life. Although these findings were not obtained in a supervisory or employee-voice context, they provide complementary evidence that Dark Triad traits may shape responses to corrective input through distinct psychological processes (Curtis et al., 2026). In this respect, the findings support the literature showing that voice is not independent of the supervisor's status, the quality of the relationship established with employees, or supervisors' responses to employee input (Botero & Van Dyne, 2009; Pfrombeck et al., 2022).

From the perspective of Social Exchange Theory, this result suggests that employee voice represents a voluntary contribution offered by employees to both the organization and the supervisor. Whereas employees are expected to reciprocate supervisor relationships grounded in mutual trust, respect, and fairness with positive behavior, perceiving supervisors as acting in their own interests and treating employees instrumentally may disrupt this balance of reciprocity (Blau, 1964; O'Boyle et al., 2012). In such relationships, employees may limit their extra-role contributions to the organization rather than directly confronting their supervisors. A decline in employee voice may therefore be interpreted not only as passive withdrawal driven by fear, but also as a behavioral response to a negative supervisor–employee relationship.

Perceived Dark Triad traits in supervisors were also found to be positively associated with emotional manipulation. This result is consistent with studies linking dark personality traits to tendencies to direct others' emotions and behaviors toward personal goals (Austin et al., 2007; Austin et al., 2014; Hyde et al., 2020). The interpersonal instrumentality, low empathy, and self-interest orientation embedded in the common structure of the Dark Triad may create

conditions in which supervisors use employees' emotions as instruments of control and direction. Whereas emotional manipulation may serve more planned and strategic goals in Machiavellianism, supervisors with narcissistic traits may direct employees' emotions to preserve their positive self-image and status. In psychopathic traits, low empathy and a lack of remorse may facilitate disregard for the emotional consequences of manipulative behavior for employees.

This finding is consistent with Burns et al. (2024), who showed that emotional manipulation may constitute an explanatory process in the relationship between Machiavellianism and counterproductive work behavior. Similarly, Luthfiyah and Parahyanti (2025) found that Machiavellianism and psychopathy positively predicted emotional manipulation. However, the nonsignificant effect of narcissism in the same study suggests that the relationships between Dark Triad dimensions and emotional manipulation may vary according to the sample and the model examined. The present study, however, identified this relationship not through supervisors' self-reported personality traits, but through employees' perceptions of supervisory behavior. This distinction is important because employees' attitudes and behaviors may be shaped less by supervisors' objective personality traits than by how those traits are observed and interpreted by employees.

The findings are also consistent with the core assumptions of Trait Activation Theory. According to the theory, personality traits become more visible when situational cues allow the relevant traits to be translated into behavior (Tett & Burnett, 2003). In the private banking sector, pronounced hierarchical relationships, high performance targets, and supervisors' influence over employees' careers may create a context conducive to the expression of manipulative behaviors associated with dark personality traits in interpersonal interactions. However, because these organizational conditions were not directly measured in the present study, this explanation should be treated as a theoretical interpretation that contributes to understanding the findings rather than as an empirically verified mechanism.

Perceived emotional manipulation by the supervisor, in turn, was negatively associated with employee voice. The limited number of studies directly examining the relationship between emotional manipulation and employee voice indicates that this finding makes an important contribution to the literature. Emotional manipulation may involve supervisors directing employees' behavior by exploiting their fear, anxiety, guilt, need for approval, or desire for appreciation. Employees exposed to such behavior may find it more difficult to evaluate their supervisors' true intentions and anticipate their reactions. The belief that their views may be distorted, used against them, or trigger unexpected supervisory responses may increase the perceived interpersonal cost of voice.

This result is consistent with Krause's (2012) observations linking emotional manipulation to loss of trust and relational deterioration. Studies showing that abusive supervision, workplace bullying, and other negative interpersonal behaviors are associated with employee outcomes such as psychological distress, emotional exhaustion, and withdrawal also provide a closely related and supportive framework for the present finding (Chu, 2014; Giorgi et al., 2016; Wu & Hu, 2009). Nevertheless, it should be acknowledged that these studies did not directly measure emotional manipulation. The contribution of the present study lies in demonstrating that, unlike more overt and hostile forms of supervisory behavior, emotional manipulation, which may be enacted in subtle ways, is also negatively associated with employees' willingness to express constructive views.

Social Exchange Theory also provides a useful framework for explaining

this relationship. When supervisors use employees' emotional vulnerabilities to pursue their own goals, the supervisor–employee relationship may move away from a foundation of trust, fairness, and mutual respect. Because employee voice is a discretionary and extra-role contribution rather than a mandatory task behavior, employees may respond to negative supervisory behavior by limiting their voice (Blau, 1964; Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). Nevertheless, the fact that the direct path from Dark Triad traits to employee voice remained significant after emotional manipulation was included in the model suggests that emotional manipulation is not the sole mechanism underlying this relationship. Other relational processes, such as trust in the supervisor, psychological safety, perceived threat, and supervisory openness, may also help account for the association between perceptions of supervisors' dark traits and employee voice.

The relationship between emotional manipulation and employee voice was also found to differ according to employee gender. The simple slope results showed that the negative relationship between emotional manipulation and employee voice was significant and stronger among female employees, whereas it was negative but not statistically significant among male employees. Although previous studies have examined gender differences in processes related to emotional manipulation, the present finding provides preliminary evidence that the relationship between emotional manipulation and employee voice may vary by gender (Hyde et al., 2020; Luthfiyah & Parahyanti, 2025). Prior research has examined different stages of these relationships and has not produced consistent results; for example, Luthfiyah and Parahyanti (2025) found that gender did not moderate the relationship between the Dark Triad and emotional manipulation. Nevertheless, the present finding should not be interpreted as indicating that women are generally more susceptible or vulnerable to emotional manipulation. The study merely shows that, within the sample examined, the relationship between perceived emotional manipulation and voice was stronger among female employees.

One possible explanation for this difference is that the interpersonal costs and relational risks associated with manipulative supervisory behavior may be evaluated differently by female and male employees. However, the study did not directly measure the perception of emotional cues, relational orientation, gender roles, or experiences of power in the workplace. It is therefore not possible to draw definitive conclusions about the mechanisms underlying this gender difference. Rather than treating gender as an explanatory personal characteristic in itself, the findings suggest that it functions as a boundary condition that alters how emotional manipulation is reflected in employee behavior and should be further examined and replicated in future research.

This difference was also reflected in the conditional indirect effect results. The indirect effect of perceived Dark Triad traits in supervisors on employee voice through emotional manipulation was significant among female employees but not statistically significant among male employees. The fact that the confidence interval for the index of moderated mediation did not include zero indicates that the difference in indirect effects between the two groups was statistically significant. In addition, the conditional indirect effects calculated for each of the Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy dimensions were significant among female employees, suggesting that the process was not driven solely by a single Dark Triad dimension. The similar pattern observed across the dimensions indicates that the common interpersonal core of the Dark Triad may be reflected in employee voice through emotional manipulation. However, because the shared variance among the dimensions and their dimension-specific contributions were not separated and tested within the same model, this finding should be regarded as a cautious theoretical inference rather than direct evidence

of a common core.

The conditional indirect effect finding supports the usefulness of considering Trait Activation Theory and Social Exchange Theory together. Trait Activation Theory provides a framework for understanding how perceived dark personality traits in supervisors may be expressed through observable behaviors such as emotional manipulation, whereas Social Exchange Theory provides a framework for understanding why employees may respond to such behavior by limiting their voluntary contributions. The moderating role of gender further indicates that this process does not occur with equal strength among all employees. Thus, the study not only identifies an association between Dark Triad traits and employee voice, but also provides evidence consistent with an interpersonal pathway involving emotional manipulation and shows that the strength of this pathway differs across employees.

Overall, the study brings together the literature on perceived Dark Triad traits in supervisors and employee voice through the concept of emotional manipulation. The findings suggest that merely appearing open to employee input may not be sufficient to support employee voice; attention should also be paid to the purposes for which supervisors use employees' emotions and relational vulnerabilities. In this context, emotional manipulation emerges as an important interpersonal process that may help account for the association between perceived dark personality traits in supervisors and the voluntary and constructive contributions employees provide to the organization.

5. Limitations

This study contributes to understanding the relationships among perceived Dark Triad traits in supervisors, emotional manipulation, and employee voice; however, its findings should be interpreted in light of several limitations. The cross-sectional design limits the extent to which definitive conclusions can be drawn regarding the temporal ordering and causal direction of the relationships among the variables. Although perceived Dark Triad traits in supervisors were found to be associated with emotional manipulation, and both Dark Triad traits and emotional manipulation were found to be related to employee voice, the fact that all variables were measured at the same point in time precludes interpreting these relationships as causal processes. Future research could employ time-lagged and longitudinal designs in which the variables are measured at different points in time, thereby allowing a more robust assessment of how perceptions of supervisors' dark traits relate over time to emotional manipulation and employee voice.

The fact that data on all variables were obtained from the same participants within the same measurement process raises the possibility of common method bias. Although Harman's single-factor test did not indicate a dominant single-factor structure, this test cannot rule out common method effects. In particular, because perceived Dark Triad traits and emotional manipulation were both based on employees' evaluations of the same supervisor, the association between these constructs may partly reflect shared perceptual variance. The simultaneous collection of these evaluations together with employees' self-reported voice behavior may also have contributed to common-source variance. Future studies are therefore encouraged to collect data at different times and from multiple sources. For example, employees may assess perceived Dark Triad traits and emotional manipulation in their supervisors, whereas employee voice may also be evaluated by coworkers or supervisors. Given that the focus of the present study is employees' perceptions of their supervisors, however, supervisors' self-reported personality assessments should be used as a complementary data source rather than as a substitute for employee perceptions.

In this study, Dark Triad traits and emotional manipulation were measured through employees' evaluations of their supervisors. Although the validity and reliability findings for the measurement model were acceptable, adapting the scale items for supervisor evaluation requires the findings to be interpreted in terms of employees' perceptions rather than as objective indicators of supervisors' personality traits or behaviors. Future research could contribute to assessing the robustness of the present findings by using instruments specifically developed for observer ratings of supervisors or measures whose validity has been further established across different samples.

The sample consisted of employees working in private banks operating in Türkiye. Although the banking sector provides a meaningful context for examining the research model because of its demanding performance targets, pronounced hierarchical structure, and supervisors' influence over employees' duties and careers, these characteristics limit the direct generalizability of the findings to other sectors and organizational structures. Future research could test the model in public institutions, manufacturing firms, healthcare organizations, educational institutions, and more horizontally structured organizations to determine whether the observed relationships vary across contexts. Cross-national comparative studies could also reveal how cultural and organizational conditions, such as power distance, competitive climate, accountability, and organizational transparency, shape the behavioral manifestations of dark personality traits.

Gender was examined through female and male employee groups; however, the processes that may explain why the relationship between emotional manipulation and employee voice was stronger among female employees were not directly measured. The present findings should therefore not be interpreted as indicating that women are generally more susceptible or vulnerable to emotional manipulation. Future research should move beyond merely retesting gender differences and incorporate potential explanatory mechanisms such as gender-role expectations, organizational status, experiences of power, relational orientation, trust in the supervisor, and psychological safety. Variables such as supervisory openness, leader-member exchange, and organizational ethical climate could also be examined as boundary conditions that may attenuate the negative relationship between emotional manipulation and employee voice. The fact that the direct effect of Dark Triad traits remained significant after emotional manipulation was included in the model further suggests that future studies should investigate alternative mediating mechanisms, including distrust in the supervisor, perceived threat, organizational justice, and psychological safety.

6. Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between perceived Dark Triad personality traits in supervisors and employee voice by jointly considering the explanatory role of emotional manipulation and the moderating effect of employee gender. The findings showed that employees who perceived higher levels of Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy in their supervisors reported lower levels of employee voice and evaluated their supervisors as engaging in greater emotional manipulation. Perceived emotional manipulation by the supervisor was also negatively associated with employees' willingness to express their ideas, suggestions, and concerns. Thus, the findings suggest that perceptions of dark supervisory traits are related to employees' voluntary and constructive contributions both directly and indirectly through perceived emotional manipulation.

The conditional process findings indicate that the negative relationship

between emotional manipulation and employee voice did not emerge with equal strength across all employees. Both this relationship and the indirect effect of the Dark Triad on employee voice through emotional manipulation were significant among female employees, but not statistically significant among male employees. This result does not support a general conclusion that female employees are more susceptible to manipulation; rather, it shows that, within the sample examined, gender appeared to function as a boundary condition that differentiated the strength of the conditional indirect process.

From a practical perspective, the findings indicate that employee voice cannot be supported merely by providing formal channels through which employees may express their views. Employees' willingness to use these channels also depends on whether they trust their supervisors' intentions and believe that speaking up will not expose them to emotional pressure, instrumental treatment, or adverse consequences. Accordingly, supervisor selection and promotion processes should assess not only visible attributes such as performance, self-confidence, and persuasiveness, but also the ethical and interpersonal quality of supervisors' relationships with employees. Multisource feedback systems, safe and confidential reporting channels, regular evaluations of supervisory behavior, and mechanisms through which employees can express their views without fear of retaliation may help identify manipulative supervisory behavior and protect employee voice. In conclusion, organizations seeking to benefit from employees' knowledge and suggestions must not only establish structures that encourage speaking up, but also foster supervisor–employee relationships in which employees perceive voice as safe.

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