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The relationships of sexually harassing behaviors to organizational context factors and working men's dark personality traits

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Abstract

This research examined the roles of organization contexts factors and dark personality traits in men's ($N = 600$) self-reports of sexually harassing behaviors toward women in the workplace. Four organization context factors (a permissive climate, a masculinized job/gender context, male/female contact, and Masculinity Contest Culture [MCC] Norms) and four dark personality traits (psychopathy, narcissism, Machiavellianism, and sadism) were examined. While only one organizational context factor, MCC Norms correlated with men's admissions of sexually harassing behaviors at work, all four dark personality traits evidenced significant correlations. In a multiple regression analysis, MCC Norms emerged again as the single organizational context predictor and psychopathy as the single personality predictor of men's admissions of sexually harassing behaviors at work. Moderation analyses showed that a masculinized job/gender context interacted with psychopathy to produce more admissions of sexually harassing behaviors. Mediation analyses showed that psychopathy, narcissism, and Machiavellianism had indirect relationships with admissions of sexually harassing behaviors through MCC Norms. Higher levels on these traits were related to higher levels of these workplace norms which, in turn, predicted more admissions of sexually harassing behavior. This research sheds new light on how both organizational contexts and enduring personal characteristics of men are related to sexual harassment in the workplace.

KEYWORDS

dark traits, organizational contexts, sexual harassment

1 | INTRODUCTION

Workplace sexual harassment may be defined as unwanted sexual or gender-related behavior. From the perspective of the target, such behavior is often offensive or intimidating. Sexual harassment is a widespread problem in workplaces across the world (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2015; Rospenda et al., 2009; Smith et al., 2019). The vast majority of the perpetrators of sexual harassing behaviors are men and their targets are predominantly women (Fitzgerald & Cortina, 2018; Schneider et al., 2011). Why do men

sexually harass women at work? In a comprehensive review of the sexual harassment literature, the National Academy of Sciences, Engineering, & Medicine (2018) concluded that "Organizational climate is the single most important factor in determining whether sexual harassment is likely to occur in a work setting" (p. 121). Specifically, surveys of women's reports of their experiences have found that sexual harassment is more likely to occur in organizations where there is a *permissive climate* toward sexual harassment (Hulin et al., 1996; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2018; Pryor et al., 1993). Permissive norms are importantly

influenced by the leadership in an organization, especially local leaders (Murdoch et al., 2009; Pryor et al., 1995). Sexual harassment is also more likely to occur in a *masculinized job/gender context* (Fitzgerald et al., 1997) in which men outnumber women, leaders are predominantly men, and the job itself is one that has been traditionally performed by men. Furthermore, some organizational contexts seem to present more risk of sexual harassment simply because they involve more *male/female contact* (Gutek et al., 1990). Finally, recent studies have found that sexual harassment is more likely in organizations with *Masculinity Contest Cultures (MCCs)* (Glick et al., 2018). In such hypercompetitive cultures, men are encouraged to prove their masculinity in quests to dominate others (Berdahl et al., 2018).

Just as some organizational contexts seem more likely to produce sexually harassing behaviors in men than others, some men seem inherently more likely to commit sexually harassing behaviors than others. Male tendencies to sexually harass have been found to be correlated with individual differences in gender-related attitudes and beliefs, as well as preferences for group-based hierarchy and inequality (Hitlan et al., 2009; Maass et al., 2003; Pryor, 1987). Accumulating research also has found that *dark personality traits such as psychopathy, narcissism, Machiavellianism, and sadism* are correlated with proclivities for sexual harassment and other similar behaviors (Buckels et al., 2019; Carre et al., 2018; Halper & Rios, 2019; March et al., 2017; Tang et al., 2020; Zeigler-Hill et al., 2016). As compared to broader trait assessments such as five factor approaches, the assessment of dark traits is more closely focused upon personality factors that predict malevolent organizational behaviors (LeBreton et al., 2018). At the same time, assessing dark traits potentially provides a more general understanding of individual difference factors potentially relevant for sexually harassing behaviors than assessments focused upon specific gender-related measures or group preferences. The current research examines the relationships of these four dark traits (Paulhus et al., 2021) to men's self-reports of sexually harassing behaviors at work. This research also examines the relationships between men's perceptions of organizational context factors and their sexually harassing behaviors.

A sample of working men was asked about the frequency with which they had performed three basic types of uninvited sexual or gender-related behaviors in interacting with women at work in the last year: *gender harassment* (crude sexual or sexist behaviors that convey insulting or hostile attitudes toward women), *unwanted sexual attention* (persistent attempts to establish unwanted sexual relationships), and *sexual coercion* (using threats or bribes to solicit sexual involvement) (Fitzgerald et al., 1995; Fitzgerald, Magley, et al., 1999; Gelfand et al., 1995). Across a multitude of surveys of women's experiences as targets of sexually harassing behavior, this tripart model has emerged as a useful framework for estimating prevalence and examining correlates (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2018).

How do men's dark traits and organizational contexts jointly relate to sexually harassing behaviors? Some prior research has found

that individual differences in male characteristics and context factors can have independent effects upon the occurrence of sexually harassing behaviors (Hitlan et al., 2009). Based upon the correlations prior research has found between the perpetration of sexual harassment and dark traits, and the correlations found between reports of sexually harassing experiences and social context factors, it may be hypothesized that both dark traits and social context factors will be correlated with admissions of sexually harassing behaviors in the current study. Other research has found that male characteristics and context factors sometimes interact in producing sexually harassing behaviors (Dekker & Barling, 1998; Maass et al., 2003; Pryor et al., 1993) such that context factors moderate the influence of male characteristics. For example, while early research found that men with low perspective taking skills were more likely to profess a willingness to sexually harass (Pryor, 1987), subsequent research by Dekker and Barling (1998) found that men with low perspective taking skills were more likely to admit to having performed sexually harassing behaviors at work when they perceived fewer company sanctions for doing so. Admissions of sexually harassing behaviors were unrelated to the perception of company sanctions when men were high in perspective taking skills. This finding suggests that men are more likely to act upon their predispositions to sexually harass in certain social contexts. Such a finding either might be interpreted as a facilitation effect (i.e., a lack of sanctions triggered predispositions to sexually harass) or an inhibition effect (i.e., the presence of sanctions suppressed predispositions to sexually harass) or both. A third possibility is that predispositions to sexually harass could be correlated with social contexts such that contexts can mediate the relationships of male proclivities to sexually harassing behaviors. Men with tendencies to sexually harass could gravitate toward certain work environments where sexual harassment is more tolerated or common, or they might influence their work contexts so that sexually harassing behaviors are more normative (Cantalupo & Kidder, 2018; Farrow, 2019; Forster & Lund, 2018). These three hypotheses about how male characteristics and organizational contexts jointly relate to sexually harassing behaviors are not mutually exclusive hypotheses. All three of these possible relationships will be explored in the current study.

2 | METHOD

2.1 | Participants and procedures

A representative sample of 1789 Dutch men who were currently working were contacted from a national online panel to participate in a survey on *social interactions at work*. Participants were members of a panel recruited by the Flycatcher Internet Research Agency (<https://www.flycatcher.eu/en>). Panel members are compensated with gift cards, but can also donate their compensation to charity. Sixty percent of those contacted ($N = 1073$) indicated an interest in participating and were emailed an informed consent document describing the main purpose of the study as an examination of "the

influence of personality and environmental factors on interactions with women at work.” Of these, 600 completed the entire survey between September 23, 2022, and October 5, 2022. Respondents came from all provinces in the Netherlands and their numbers were generally proportionate to the populations of their provinces. Ages ranged from 19 to over 65 ($M = 48.75$, $SD = 12.73$). Relative to their proportions in the population, older and younger groups were somewhat underrepresented due to the requirement that participants be currently working. A total of 27% indicated that they currently held managerial positions and 12% indicated mainly working at home (e.g., online).¹ In terms of educational attainment, 86% had a moderate or high level of educational attainment.

The survey was originally written in English. It was translated into Dutch by Stutterheim and then back-translated and checked for clarity by Lemmens (Brislin, 1970). The survey was subsequently pretested with members of the target population to fine-tune the translation. The first section of the online survey contained general questions about the participant's job and descriptions of their workplace, including the job/gender context, degree of male/female contact, and MCC workplace norms (see below). No mention was made of sexual harassment. The second section, entitled “Uninvited Behaviors with Women at Work,” asked respondents about specific behaviors they had performed at work. Following this section, respondents were asked whether they regarded any of the behaviors they reviewed to be *sexual harassment* (in Dutch, *seksueel grensoverschrijd*). Then they were asked about Organizational Responses to Sexual Harassment (see below). The final section contained the Dark Tetrad Questionnaire and a measure of socially desirable response set followed by ancillary measures not focal to the research.²

2.2 | Measurements

2.2.1 | Sexually harassing behaviors

In the current survey, men were asked about the frequency with which they performed 25 *uninvited* sexual or gender-related behaviors in interacting with women at work in the last year. These behaviors were based upon the Sexual Experiences Questionnaire (SEQ) (Fitzgerald et al., 1997; Fitzgerald, Drasgow, et al., 1999). The SEQ has been widely used to measure both the experiences of people who are targets of unwanted sexual and gender-related behaviors (Stark et al., 2002; Swartout et al., 2019) and the self-admitted behaviors of harassers (Stander et al., 2018). The SEQ has proven to be a valid and reliable measure of sexually harassing behavior. It predicts negative mental health and professional consequences among people who have been sexually harassed (Fitzgerald & Cortina, 2018). In a longitudinal study of male military personnel, admissions of SEQ behaviors predicted subsequent SEQ behaviors measured 24 months later and contemporary SEQ behaviors predicted contemporary sexual assaults (Stander et al., 2018). The SEQ has proven to be a robust measure of sexually harassing behavior across studies with specific item variations,

diverse samples and gender differences (Lee & Ormerod, 2003; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2018).

Following the procedures used in previous surveys of women's experiences (Fitzgerald et al., 1997), no mention was initially made about whether these behaviors represented sexual harassment. Respondents were asked to rate the frequency with which they had performed each uninvited behavior in the last year using a 5-point scale with the anchors: *Never*, *Once or twice*, *Sometimes*, *Often*, or *Very often*. The 25 behaviors were presented in blocks of 5. Along with each block of 5 harassing behaviors, a positive social behavior was also presented (e.g., “Held the door open for a woman coming into work”). The purpose of presenting these prosocial behaviors was to reduce a straight-lining response set (e.g., just saying never to everything) and to help to obscure the focus upon sexually harassing behaviors. The order of these six behaviors was randomized within the block and the order of the blocks was randomized for each participant. From the participants' perspective, the blocks were not apparent. They merely rated a series of 30 behaviors. The English version of the complete survey can be found at <https://osf.io/bw876>. The Dutch translation can be found at <https://osf.io/qdkfx>.

2.2.2 | Measures of organizational context

Permissive climate (Pryor et al., 1995) was measured by 5 items reflecting the reactions of local organizational leaders to sexual harassment: “Supervisors make reasonable efforts to prevent sexual harassment at work,” “Supervisors ignore sexual harassment at work,” “Supervisors participate in sexually harassing behaviors,” “Leaders at work provide good role models for how employees should interact with one another,” and “Supervisors discourage sexual harassment complaints.” Participants rated their relative agreement with each statement on a 7-point scale. Positive items were reverse scored and an average was computed to reflect permissive climate. *Masculinized job/gender context* (Fitzgerald et al., 1997) was measured by three items: the ratio of men to women in the immediate workplace (rated on a 5-point scale of *exclusively women* to *exclusively men*), the gender of leaders and managers in the organization (rated on a 5-point scale of *exclusively women* to *exclusively men*), and the gender-role traditionality of the respondent's job (whether it is mostly done by men or women). Ratings of these items were converted to standard scores and averaged to form a job/gender context index with higher values representing a more masculinized context. *Male/female workplace contact* (Gutek et al., 1990) was assessed by three items: “How much opportunity is there to have work-related conversations with women at work?” “How much opportunity is there for informal chats with women at work?” and “How often do you work with women (as colleagues, clients, patients, etc.) in your job?” All three were rated on 3-point scales of “never,” “sometimes,” and “often.” Ratings were converted to standard scores and averaged to form an index. *MCC Norms* (Glick et al., 2018) reflect the degree to which a workplace constitutes an arena for proving masculinity. These items represent four subscales: *show no weakness* (e.g., “In my work environment, admitting that you don't know the answer looks weak”),

strength and stamina (e.g., "In my work environment, it is important to be in good physical shape to be respected"), *put work first* (e.g., "In my work environment, leadership expects employees to put work first"), and *dog eat dog* (e.g., "In my work environment, one person's loss is another person's gain"). Using 5-point scales, respondents rated the degree to which 20 items were characteristic of their workplaces. Ratings were averaged to form an overall index. Means and standard deviations of all measures are shown in Table 1. As shown in Table 2 (see diagonal), there was good reliability for each of these organizational context measures.

2.2.3 | Measures of personality-factors/individual-differences

The *Dark Tetrad* (Paulhus et al., 2021) was designed as a subclinical assessment of the dark traits: psychopathy, narcissism, Machiavellianism,

TABLE 1 Means, standard deviations, and range ($N = 600$).

	M	SD	Range
Sexually harassing behaviors	0.03	0.15	2.45
Job gender context	-0.01	0.81	3.82
Permissive climate	3.00	1.76	7.00
Male/female contact	0.00	0.82	3.27
Masculinity Contest Culture	1.77	0.66	3.50
Psychopathy	2.44	0.88	6.00
Narcissism	3.64	0.96	6.00
Machiavellianism	3.74	0.96	6.00
Sadism	2.51	0.98	6.00
Social desirable response set	1.01	1.23	5.00

TABLE 2 Zero order correlations for sexually harassing behaviors, organizational contexts, Dark Tetrad traits, and desirable response set.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Sexually harassing behaviors	.91	.05	.08	.01	.20**	.24**	.10*	.14**	.20**	-.08
2. Job gender context		.71	-.11**	-.18**	.04	.06	.04	.05	.13**	-.03
3. Permissive climate			.75	-.28**	.18**	.14**	.00	.09*	.15**	-.11**
4. Male/female contact				.76	-.15**	-.11**	.06	-.03	-.07	.03
5. Masculinity Contest Culture					.93	.31**	.13**	.31**	.23**	-.15**
6. Psychopathy						.72	.46**	.44**	.58**	-.33**
7. Narcissism							.75	.49**	.42**	-.11**
8. Machiavellianism								.71	.52**	-.26**
9. Sadism									.73	-.38**
10. Social desirable response set										.61

Note: Reliability coefficients (Cronbach's α) appear in the diagonal.

*Correlation is significant at the .05 level (two-tailed).

**Correlation is significant at the .01 level (two-tailed).

and sadism. It consists of seven items for each trait scale. Participants rated their relative agreement with each item using a 5-point scale. Ratings were averaged to produce the four trait ratings.

Finally, for statistical control purposes, the survey included a measure of socially desirable response set (Hays et al., 1989). All five items were rated on 5-point scale (*definitely true* to *definitely false*). Socially desirable ratings were scored 1. All others were scored 0 for each item. Scores were summed for an index of socially desirable response set. Reliability coefficients (Cronbach's α) for all scales are found in Table 2.

3 | RESULTS

3.1 | Preliminary analyses

A reliability analysis of the 25 SEQ items suggested that three items showed relatively weaker item/total correlations. When these were eliminated, the resulting α was .91 (see online resource for eliminated items). A measure of sexually harassing behavior was computed by averaging the ratings across the 22 behaviors. Across the 22 sexually harassing behaviors, 20.7% of the respondents reported having engaged in at least one behavior in the last year. Among respondents, 14.2% reported engaging in gender harassment, 10.7% reported taking part in unwanted sexual attention, and 1.7% reported perpetrating sexual coercion. Replicating prior SEQ research (e.g., Stark et al., 2002), the intercorrelations of self-reports of the three forms of sexual harassment were very high (r 's $> .71$, p 's $< .01$). After indicating whether they had performed each of these behaviors in the last year, participants were asked whether they regarded any of the behaviors listed as sexual harassment. Almost two-thirds (65.7%) of the respondents did not regard any of the behaviors to constitute *sexual harassment*. This finding is generally consistent with findings from research on women who report experiencing sexually harassing

behavior—the majority do not label it as “sexual harassment” per se (Fitzgerald & Cortina, 2018). In the current survey, there were no differences across respondents who admitted to performing the behaviors and those who did not when it came to regarding the behaviors as sexual harassment, $\chi^2(2) = 3.38, p = .18$.

3.2 | Organizational contexts and dark traits

Table 2 shows that all of the Dark Tetrad personality variables were significantly correlated with more admissions of sexually harassing

behaviors. In contrast, among the organizational context variables, only MCC Norms correlated with more sexually harassing behaviors. A regression analysis was performed that controlled for socially desirable response set and entered simultaneously all of the context and Dark Tetrad variables. As shown in Table 3, only the context variable, MCC Norms, and one Dark Tetrad trait, *psychopathy*, were significantly related to admissions of sexually harassing behaviors. These results support the hypothesis that male proclivities and organizational contexts can independently contribute to the likelihood of sexually harassing behavior.

3.3 | Moderation analyses

The moderation hypothesis was that context variables might moderate the influence of dark traits on sexual harassment. Personality factors that represent proclivities for sexually harassing behavior might be facilitated by certain organizational contexts and possibly inhibited under others. One of the defining characteristics of moderation is that the predictor variable and the moderator variables are uncorrelated (Hayes, 2022). As shown in Table 1, initial correlation analyses showed that the Dark Tetrad Personality traits were correlated with several of the organizational context factors. These correlations preclude the possibility of moderation relationships.

Focusing upon the organizational context variables that proved not to be correlated with specific Dark Tetrad variables, a series of moderation analyses were conducted following the PROCESS procedures described in Hayes (2022). PROCESS generates 95% confidence intervals using 5000 bootstrap samples. In each of these analyses, the three non-focal Dark Tetrad traits and socially desirable response set were controlled as covariates. Only one of these analyses showed evidence of a significant moderation effect. The relationship between psychopathy and sexually harassing behaviors was moderated by job/gender context. This moderation effect is depicted in Figures 1 and 2.

TABLE 3 Regression for predicting sexually harassing behaviors from organizational context variables and Dark Tetrad traits.

		B	SE	b	t	p
Model 1	(Constant)	0.04	0.01		5.39	<.01
	Social desirable response set	-0.01	0.01	-0.08	-1.90	.06
Model 2	(Constant)	-0.12	0.03		-3.67	<.01
	Social desirable response set	0.00	0.01	0.03	0.70	.49
	Job gender context	0.01	0.01	0.05	1.13	.26
	Permissive climate	0.00	0.00	0.04	1.04	.30
	Male/female contact	0.01	0.01	0.07	1.74	.08
	Masculinity Contest Culture	0.03	0.01	0.13	3.06	.00
	Psychopathy	0.03	0.01	0.17	3.22	.00
	Narcissism	-0.01	0.01	-0.03	-0.68	.50
	Machiavellianism	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.02	.99
	Sadism	0.01	0.01	0.08	1.53	.13

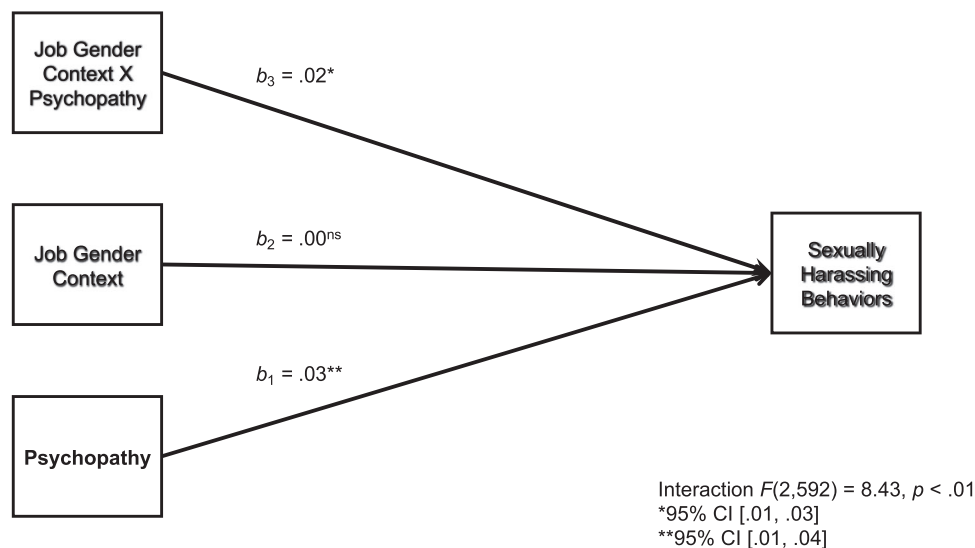
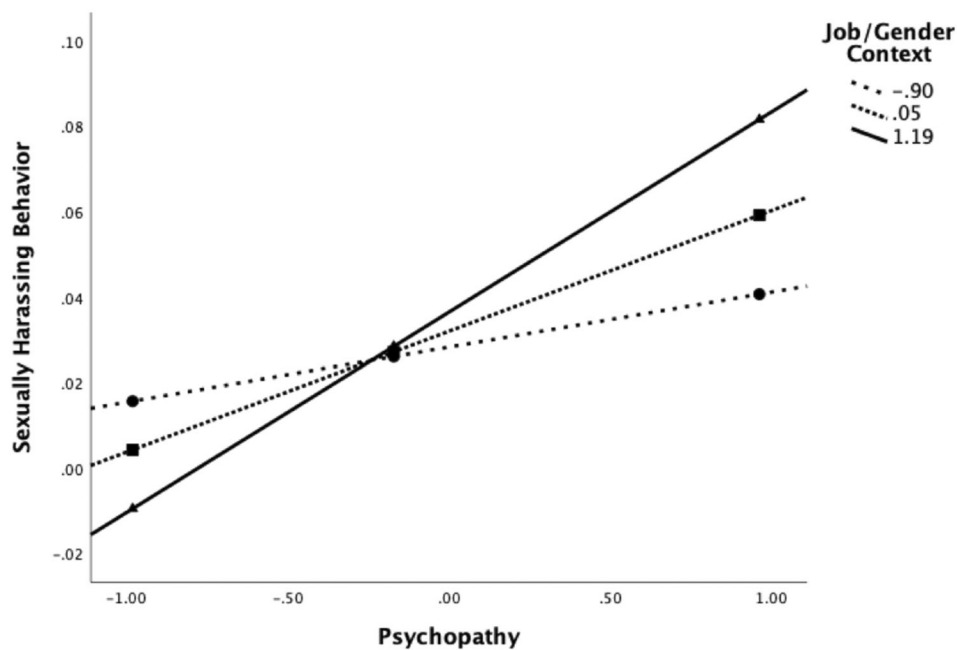


FIGURE 1 Moderation of psychopathy by job/gender context in predicting sexually harassing behaviors.



Note: Job/Gender Context values are the 16th, 50th, and 84th percentiles.

FIGURE 2 Interaction of psychopathy and job/gender context in predicting sexually harassing behavior.

As shown in Figure 2, higher levels of psychopathy were related to admitting more sexually harassing behaviors at work. More masculinized job/gender contexts (higher values) produced stronger relationships between psychopathy and admissions of sexually harassing behaviors. It is interesting to note that job/gender context by itself was not connected to admissions of sexually harassing behavior. This finding implies that this organizational context variable was not sufficient to produce more sexually harassing behavior. More masculinized job/gender contexts only related to more sexually harassing behavior for men who were higher in psychopathy.

3.4 | Mediation analyses

The *mediation hypothesis* was that organizational context factors might mediate the relationships between personality factors and the performance of sexually harassing behaviors. Men who have proclivities for sexually harassing behaviors might choose (consciously or unconsciously) to work in social contexts where sexual harassment is more likely or acceptable. Mediation could also be produced by men with certain traits altering their work environments to make them more conducive for sexual harassment. Mediation implies that a predictor is correlated with the mediator, in this case, a trait with a context variable.

Each organizational context factor was examined as a possible mediator of relationships between Dark Tetrad traits and admissions of sexually harassing behaviors. Following PROCESS procedures described in Hayes (2022), a series of Mediation Analyses were conducted in which job/gender context, permissive climate, male/

female contact, and MCC were examined simultaneously as possible mediators between each of the Dark Tetrad Personality traits and the number of sexually harassing behaviors respondents reported that they had performed at work. In the mediation analysis involving each trait, the other three Dark Tetrad traits were considered covariates. Also, as a control measure, the socially desirable response set was considered a covariate in each analysis. As shown in Figures 3–5, MCC proved to be a significant mediator in the relationships between psychopathy, narcissism, and Machiavellianism, and sexually harassing behavior. For psychopathy, there was also a direct connection to sexually harassing behavior. For narcissism and Machiavellianism, the relationships to sexually harassing behavior were completely mediated by MCC (i.e., there were no direct relationships). Neither the direct nor the indirect relationships were significant in the case of sadism. None of the other organizational context variables produced significant mediation effects.^{3,4}

4 | DISCUSSION

Of the four organizational context factors examined in the current research, only MCC demonstrated a zero order correlation with men's admissions of sexually harassing behaviors. While all of the dark traits were correlated with admissions of sexually harassing behaviors, only psychopathy predicted sexually harassing behavior when the other three traits were statistically controlled. Job/gender context emerged as a significant moderator of the relationship between psychopathy and sexually harassing behaviors, but not as a predictor by itself. Mediation analyses showed that three dark traits

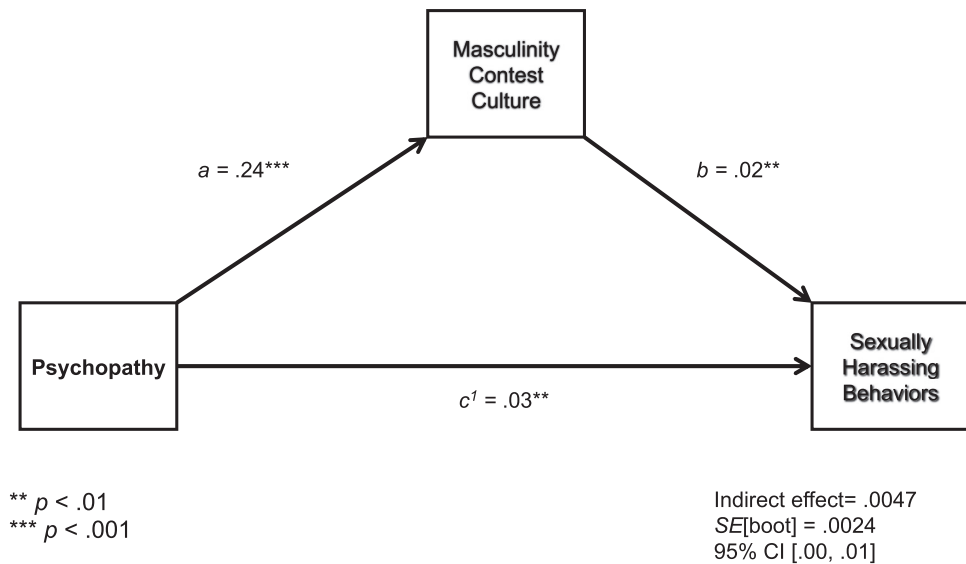


FIGURE 3 Mediation model for psychopathy and Masculine Contest Culture. ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

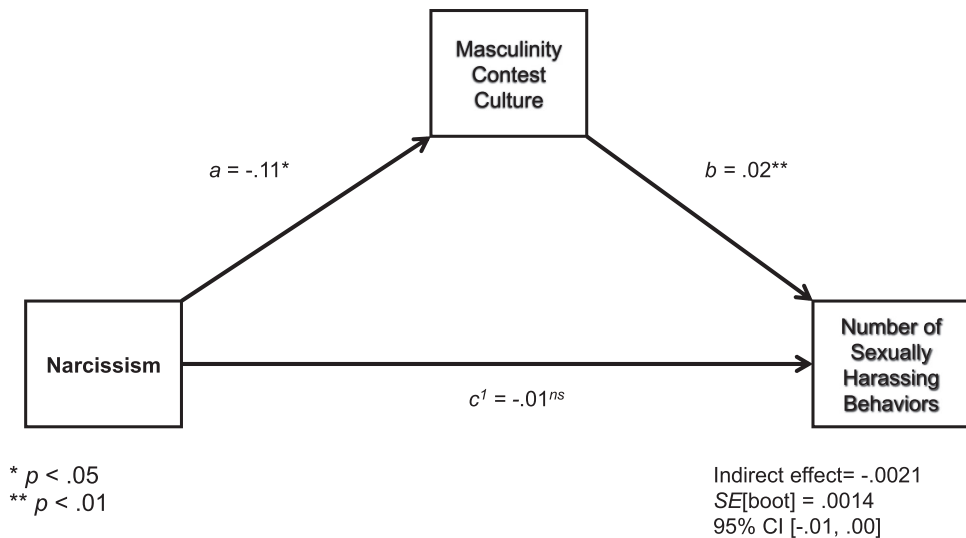


FIGURE 4 Mediation model for narcissism and Masculine Contest Culture. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

had indirect relationships to sexually harassing behaviors. Men high in psychopathy, narcissism, and Machiavellianism tended to work in environments they described as having a culture emphasizing Masculinity Contest Norms which, in turn, predicted higher levels of sexually harassing behavior.

The moderation analyses offer support for the Person/Situation Model of sexually harassing behavior originally advanced by Pryor et al. (1993). The relationship between an enduring trait and sexually harassing behavior, in this case, psychopathy, was stronger in more masculinized job/gender contexts. Men with proclivities to sexually harass may have perceived more license to do so in more masculinized job/gender contexts. Numerous studies examining women's experiences of sexually harassing behaviors at work have found that a masculinized job/gender context is correlated with

women's reporting that they have experienced more sexual harassment (Cantisano et al., 2008; Fitzgerald et al., 1997; Fitzgerald, Magley, et al., 1999). One implication of the current findings is that the relationship between job/gender contexts and sexual harassment found in women's reports could have been driven by the behaviors of men who are high in psychopathy. Without the presence of men who manifest subclinical psychopathy in a workplace, job/gender context by itself might have little or no connection to sexual harassment. Estimates suggest that 5%–15% of men in the general population have subclinical psychopathy (LeBreton et al., 2006). Perhaps, when men with subclinical psychopathy find themselves in masculinized job/gender contexts, they expect fewer negative sanctions from sexually harassing behavior. It is also possible that being in a predominantly male environment primes sexually

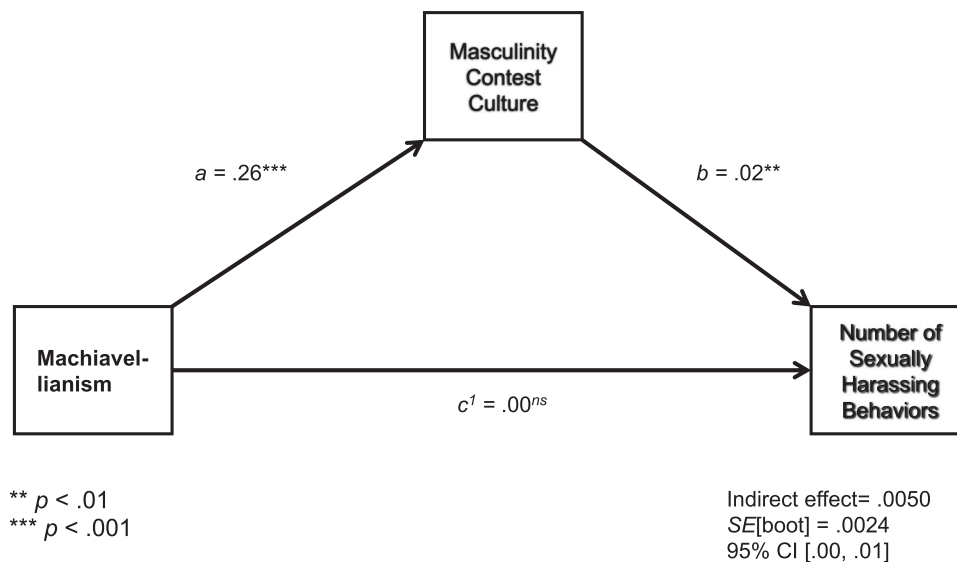


FIGURE 5 Mediation model for Machiavellianism and Masculine Contest Culture. $**p < .01$; $***p < .001$.

harassing behavior either because men observe such behaviors in their co-workers or because the environment primes stereotypes of maleness.

The single organizational context variable that predicted admissions of sexually harassing behavior by itself was MCC (Berdahl et al., 2018). Men who described their work environments as embodying the macho dictums of showing no weakness, glorifying strength and stamina, putting work first, and competing with co-workers in a sum-zero game (*dog eat dog*) were also more likely to admit sexually harassing behaviors toward women at work. Interestingly, men who were high in psychopathy, narcissism, or Machiavellianism were more likely to describe their work environments as MCCs and these personality traits had indirect relationships to sexually harassing behaviors through higher MCC ratings (psychopathy also had a direct relationship). Perhaps, men who are higher in psychopathy, narcissism, or Machiavellianism were somehow drawn (either consciously or unconsciously) to such work environments where “toxic masculinity” was the norm. Another possibility is that work cultures are influenced by the presence of men with these traits. Paulhus et al. (2021) have argued that a core tendency toward the callous exploitation of others underlies these dark traits. MCCs seem to represent venues that compliment men’s dark traits and allow the expression of core tendencies such as the domination of others.

4.1 | Limitations

One limitation in the current research is that the male respondents were asked to report on behaviors they had directed toward women in the workplace that they judged to be *uninvited*. While being uninvited or unwelcome is definitional for sexually harassing behavior, what women typically judge as uninvited workplace behavior could be different from what the men in our sample

judged to be so. The perspective of the recipient of the behavior is crucial in determining whether the behavior is sexual harassment from a legal standpoint (for a discussion of these issues, see Schneider et al., 2011). One implication is that the behaviors reported by respondents in the current survey probably represented only a subset of their sexually harassing behaviors at work—the behaviors they perceived were uninvited. Future research might try to use women as informants about male behaviors (see Pryor et al., 1995).

A related issue is that men and women might have different views of organizational context factors. For example, Glick et al. (2018) found that women evidenced somewhat lower ratings of MCC Norms than men. Clearly, many past surveys have consistently found that women were more likely to report experiencing sexually harassing behavior when they perceived permissive workplace norms (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2018). Yet, men’s views of permissive norms in their workplaces were unrelated to their admissions of sexually harassing behaviors in the current study. While workplace norms are inherently tied to the subjective perspectives of workers (both male and female), future research might examine multiple measures of norms from different informants (e.g., men and women, workers and management, etc.). Drawing measures about organizational contexts from multiple informants would also address the more general problems inherent in drawing data from single source self-reports (Fitzgerald et al., 1997; Pryor et al., 1995).

A final limitation of the current research is that we sampled only a subset of possible organization context factors that might combine with personality factors in producing sexually harassing behaviors. Some other candidates for future research include hierarchical organizational culture (Park et al., 2019), workplace alcohol consumption norms (Bacharach et al., 2007), and violations of civility norms (Cortina et al., 2017).

4.2 | Implications and conclusions

Most sexual harassment prevention efforts are based upon the premise espoused in the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, (2018) report—the root causes of sexual harassment lie in organizational climates that permit, tolerate, or encourage these sorts of behaviors. Therefore, changing the climate is assumed to change the behavior. Such intervention strategies ignore some important findings about sexual harassment illustrated in the current research: First, not all men are equally likely to perform such behaviors in the workplace and those who do might either select or social engineer their workplaces so as to more easily behave in sexually harassing ways. Second, even if context factors, such as the *job/gender context*, moderate the degree to which some men display sexually harassing behaviors, they are difficult to change. For example, the *job/gender contexts* in organizations where sexual harassment is particularly problematic (e.g., military and police forces) often remain highly masculinized despite substantial efforts to change them (Breslin et al., 2022; de Haas et al., 2010; Lonsway et al., 2013; Stander et al., 2018).

So, what solutions are implicated? In some work settings, such as the military and police forces, one possibility is using personality tests to screen people with sexual harassment proclivities. Still, legal and ethical issues might present limitations on the degree to which people might be precluded from employment based upon proclivities for what they might do as compared to their actual behaviors. Alternatives to screening out potentially high risk employees might include the following: (1) identifying individuals with stronger proclivities for sexual harassment for more extensive training and monitoring; and (2) identifying leaders of work groups where there are higher concentrations of high proclivity individuals, particularly those where facilitating context factors are also present, and alerting them to the increased risk for sexual harassment problems in their units. These leaders might be provided with training and resources to address sexual harassment problems that might arise.

While training has not proved be a panacea for reducing workplace sexual harassment problems, recent meta-analyses have found that training generally has a positive impact upon workers' knowledge about sexual harassment, their recognition of sexually harassing behaviors, their attitudes and beliefs about sexual harassment, and their intentions to report or intervene when they witness sexual harassment (Roehling et al., 2022). Some interesting questions for future research concern whether training moderates the relationship of personality factors with sexually harassing behaviors and whether training can alter organizational cultures.

While organizational contexts might be difficult to change, the incentives to change them are legion. In addition to the individual costs associated with sexual harassment in the workplace, Glick et al. (2018) point out that endemic organizational dysfunction associated with contexts such as MCCs. So far, the promise of changing organizational contexts through more effective leadership and policy reforms remains elusive. A more comprehensive approach to reducing sexual harassment might also include recognition of the

roles individual differences contribute to this harmful workplace behavior.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The research project was approved by the Maastricht University Faculty of Health, Medicine, and Life Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

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ENDNOTES

¹ While we recognize that men are sometimes the targets of sexually harassing behaviors at work and that women are sometimes the perpetrators, it is generally recognized that sexual harassment is a much more common experience for women that has more serious professional and personal consequences, and results in disproportionately more formal complaints and legal charges (Fitzgerald & Cortina, 2018).

² As a measure of general or more distal traits, participants also completed the Ten Item Personality Inventory (TIPI). The TIPI assesses the *Big Five Traits of conscientiousness, openness, neuroticism, extraversion, and agreeableness* (Gosling et al., 2003). Significant, but small negative correlations were found between admissions of sexually harassing behaviors and two Big Five measures: conscientiousness ($r(600) = -.15$) and agreeableness ($r(600) = -.11$). Similar to the analyses above, a regression analysis was conducted in which all of the Big Five traits and the context variables were entered simultaneously in predicting sexually harassing behaviors (controlling for social desirability response set). In addition to Masculine Contest Culture Norms, only conscientiousness predicted sexually harassing behaviors ($B = -0.02$, $SE = 0.01$, $b = -0.12$, $t = -2.83$, $p = .005$). When the Dark Tetrad and context variables were included in a regression analysis with the Big Five traits, both psychopathy and Masculine Contest Culture variables were still significant predictors of sexually harassing behaviors. Moderation analyses involving Big Five traits analogous to those performed with Dark Tetrad traits failed to show any significant results. In analogous mediation analyses, only one significant mediation effect emerged. The relationship between one of the Big Five traits, Emotional Stability, and sexually harassing behavior was significantly mediated by one of the organizational context variables, Masculine Contest Culture. Mediation was complete. Emotional Stability showed no evidence of a direct relationship to sexually harassing behavior.

³ The possibility of a moderated mediation model was also examined for psychopathy, narcissism, and Machiavellianism. In these models, job/

gender context was examined as a possible moderator of the relationship between each of these Dark Tetrad traits and the mediator of Masculine Contest Culture. This model also examined job/gender context as a possible moderator of the relationship Masculine Contest Culture and sexually harassing behaviors as well as the relationships of the traits to the behavior (see Hayes, 2022; Model 8). None of these analyses indicated significant moderated mediation effects.

⁴ While holding a position as a manager was correlated with admitting to higher levels of sexually harassing behavior ($r = .13$, $p < .01$), the inclusion of managerial status did not qualify any of the regression, moderation or mediation analyses reported above.

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