

# Working with monsters: counting the costs of workplace psychopaths and other toxic employees

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## Abstract

We explore the role of ‘Workplace Monsters’ in the global burden of disease, including the \$US1.15 trillion annual cost of depressive and anxiety disorders. We propose the productivity drain created by these individuals is a wicked problem, integrating several disciplines to position workplace monsters as significant corporate governance issues for organisations. Our discussion covers Monster prevalence, impacts on fellow workers and estimates of the costs incurred to business. We classify Monsters as ‘appreciating liabilities’ and call for future research to develop means of accounting for their inherent organisational costs in an effort to prompt action to address their destructive impacts.

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**Not all psychopaths are in prison – some are in the board room.**

*(Robert Hare lecture, ‘The Predators Among Us’)*

**It’s not just one monster.**

*(Suzanne Moore, on the #MeToo movement and ubiquitousness of sexual harassment at work)*

## 1. Introduction

Defined as ‘a large, ugly and frightening imaginary creature’ (Oxford Dictionary), the word ‘monster’ conjures up images of a grotesque mutant

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animal, dripping saliva from large fangs, wielding giant hairy limbs and snarling unintelligible lexes. The secondary definition of ‘an inhumanly cruel or wicked person’ shifts monsters from the fantasy domain into the real world. These monsters walk among us; they can be found in grocery stores, on the street, in places of worship and employed in workplaces.

Psychotherapist and author of *Working with monsters: How to identify and protect yourself from workplace psychopaths*, Clarke (2002), describes these employees:

Workplace psychopaths exist in a variety of workplaces. They are individuals who manipulate their way through life and leave an indelible mark on both their victims and society. They are destructive men and women - cunning, self-centred, ruthless and terrifying. They make working life a living hell for many of us.

Somewhat less than affectionately also referred to as ‘snakes in suits’ (Babiak and Hare, 2007), just who – or what – constitutes a workplace monster is usually defined in layperson’s terms. We draw from the *workplace deviance* literature to cultivate a more intellectual characterisation of these popular representations. Workplace deviance is ‘voluntary behaviour of organisation members which violates significant organisational norms and in doing so threatens the well-being of the organisation or its members’ (Robinson and Bennett, 1995, p. 556). Two deviance categories exist; organisational (e.g. theft, fraud and embezzlement) and interpersonal. The latter includes but is not limited to behaviours such as bullying, harassment (sexual and otherwise), mistreatment, undermining, verbal abuse, and overt and covert aggression (see Tepper and Henle, 2011; Hershcovis, 2011 for similarities and distinctions between forms).

Researchers have established that interpersonal deviance has a destructive impact on victims, who report lowered physical health (Lim *et al.*, 2008); psychological ill-health (Niedl, 1996; Zapf *et al.*, 1996); depression, emotional exhaustion (Hershcovis and Barling, 2010); and lowered mental health (Willness *et al.*, 2007). Victims also describe decreased emotional well-being, intensely negative emotional reactions including fear and frustration, and several stress related-symptoms. Some victims go as far as to state the perpetrator’s behaviour pushed them to ‘breaking point’, and others suffer suicide ideation (Michalak *et al.*, 2018).

We begin by broadly defining workplace monsters as employees who are perpetrators of interpersonal deviance. Unfortunately, previous research (e.g. see Aasland *et al.*, 2010; Michalak, 2015) indicates many interpersonal deviance forms are widely prevalent within workplaces, suggesting, *inter alia*, that workplace monsters pose a significant issue.

In our study, we explore what we assert is an unquestionable contribution by workplace monsters to the 12 billion work days – or 50 million work years – or \$US1.15 trillion – productivity loss attributable to anxiety and depressive disorders globally, *per annum* (Chisolm *et al.*, 2016). According to the World

Health Organization (WHO 2016), depressive disorders are the leading contributor to global burden of disease as measured by years lost to disability (YLDs), ahead of diabetes mellitus (4th), asthma (10th) and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (14th). Often comorbid with depressive disorders (Hirschfield, 2001), anxiety disorders rank 6th. With the majority of the adult population in the Western World employed and spending between 34.3 percent and 39.61 percent of their time at work (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016), the likely role of workplaces in this global burden of disease warrants examination.

We also argue that workplace monsters signify a *wicked problem* given their impact on individuals, organisations and society more broadly. First coined by Rittel and Webber (1973) to describe why applying scientific bases to confronting social policy problems is ‘bound to fail’ (p. 155), a wicked problem is often large-scale but difficult to accurately quantify in magnitude or to define clearly and involves multiple, complex and intersecting cause-and-effect relationships requiring a coordinated agency to coherently address. Problem resolution is urgent but solutions indeterminate; wicked problems resist straightforward solutions and attempting a ‘silver bullet’ more often than not only exacerbates the problem.

Illustratively, adopting a purely financial lens to place a dollar figure on workplace monster costs is flawed and difficult, usually resulting in gross underestimates. A critical organisational level barrier is that, unlike inventory damage or loss, the majority of workplace monster behaviour goes undetected and unreported, and, as a consequence, is un-accounted for. For example, while up to 96 percent of employees’ experience mistreatment at work, only one in 10 complain about their experiences and for good reason. The majority who voice in any way, for example, by discussing the perpetration with a supervisor, then suffer additional postvoice social victimisation (such as being shunned or excluded by others at work, gossiped about or labelled a ‘troublemaker’). About half face work-related postvoice victimisation (e.g. are denied a deserved promotion or given a poor job performance appraisal) (Michalak, 2015). A recent poll also showed that 71 percent of bully victims who do speak out report they were not believed, because ‘it seemed important to discredit (the victim) as a liar’, or ‘what the bully did sounded too outrageous’. A further 20 percent were believed – but only until the bully told their version of events (Workplace Bullying Institute, 2014). The largely undisputed reasons likely underpinning such disbelief will become clearer later in this study.

At the individual level, the desire to provide a presumed sought or socially acceptable response (‘social desirability biases’; Spector, 1994) by both victims *and* perpetrators further contribute to both under-reporting of interpersonal deviance, and also minimisation in ‘value’, extent or seriousness of what is reported. As a third barrier, collecting data on what may constitute potentially criminal activities (e.g. sexual assault) also raises ethical concerns (NMHRC, 2007), making it problematic even for external parties to research these behaviours.

In the light of the foregoing, it is unsurprising that most workplace monster behaviour remains in the dark. A pertinent series of questions arise – how do we accurately account for something we cannot see? Is it possible to develop a means of capturing and then risk managing the financial costs of workplace monsters – one that circumvents key barriers by not requiring victims to report, nor admission of perpetration, given neither are likely to occur? How can organisations fulfil their related corporate governance obligations regarding not only prudent financial management by minimising unnecessary expenditure relating to monsterly acts, but also ensuring compliance relating to Board and Officer duties, care and due diligence?

While answering these questions is beyond the scope of a single paper, we seek to start a multifaceted conversation about how we bring workplace monster behaviour out of the dark and into the light. In recognition of wicked problem complexity, and in the spirit of making use of incipient new opportunities that arise at the productivity (e.g. financial performance) and ethical and sustainable practice nexus, our discussion culminates in a corporate governance position, via psychology, psychiatry, health, law, accounting, finance and human resources disciplines.

Our study is arranged into four key sections. Following this introductory material, we explore perpetrator personality problems and their prevalence in an effort to quantify the likelihood or ‘risk’ a given organisation employs one or more workplace monsters. Second, we discuss signs of workplace monster presence and activity and provide some *prima facie* on cost considerations, which lead into corporate governance aspects, including financial and legal issues for organisations. Third, we briefly outline the critical role of human resources systems and practices in both preventing and intervening in workplace monster behaviour before closing with comments on ways to take forward what we hope is a thought-provoking discussion.

Note, in wake of the Harvey Weinstein scandal, it would be tempting but erroneous to limit our discussion to workplace monsters who engage in sexual harassment. We refrain from doing so first because sexual harassment is an interpersonal deviance form reported to be disproportionately perpetrated upon females by males (Rotundo *et al.*, 2001; Settles *et al.*, 2011). Thus, to adopt a narrow #MeToo approach is to implicitly exclude female monsters and or monsters who prefer nonfemale victims. Second, sexual harassment is but the tip of the monsters-at-work iceberg; one of numerous interpersonally deviant workplace behaviour forms (e.g. see Spector, 2011) that lead to negative outcomes for employees and employers.

Notwithstanding the above, the sheer number of different monsters and deviance types we could discuss mandates a clear paper scope. We restrict our study in two ways: first, we focus interpersonal deviance forms for which organisations are definitely, potentially, or likely in the near future to be exposed from a corporate governance perspective. We also discuss only internal and then merely the most unwavering workplace monsters – those

characterised by pathological personality traits and or disorders with little to no prospects of change or rehabilitation. In these respects, however, confronting the upcoming content is, the situation is, in reality, far worse than articulated within this scope.

## 2. Who or what is a workplace monster?

### 2.1. Personality problems

Personality refers to the unique psychological qualities of an individual that influence a variety of characteristic behaviour patterns (both overt and covert) across different situations and over time (Gerrig and Zimbardo, 2002). Well-established by adulthood and lifespan stable (McCrae and Costa, 2003), personality is contemporarily discoursed in terms of traits, whereby individuals are placed along a continuum according to the frequency of engaging in a given patterned thought, feeling or behaviour (Arnold *et al.*, 2005).

In explaining why people do what they do, psychologists generally contend behaviour is influenced by personality and situational factors ('person–situation interaction'; Endler, 1981). As Mischel (1968) first argued, human behaviour is complex, and rather than personality being studied in a vacuum, the concurrent and interactive impact of individual differences such as personality and situational influences should be considered when exploring behaviour determinants.

Though variation exists – predominantly due to organisational size and maturity – workplaces are generally considered 'strong situations' because they typically develop and enforce rules, norms and standards that are intended to regulate employee behaviour (Meyer *et al.*, 2010). In the line with the foregoing, interpersonally deviant acts, by definition, involve the violation of significant organisational norms (Robinson and Bennett, 1995). Indeed, as Durkheim (1895/2013) emphasised long ago, deviance more broadly can be thought of as playing a key role in clarifying norms, increasing conformity, reinforcing the social bonds that exist between those reacting to a deviant and providing the opportunity for social change to occur.

According to Meyer *et al.* (2010: p. 122–127) situational strength, or the 'implicit or explicit cues provided by external entities regarding the desirability of potential behaviours' can be operationalised in terms of four constructs: (i) clarity, (ii) consistency, (iii) constraints and (iv) consequences (see Table 1).

When we consider person–situation interaction as the most critical determinant of employee behaviour, it is important to understand that just as situations vary in strength, likewise not all personalities are created equal. Normal personality traits exist, such the popular Big Five (extraversion, neuroticism {emotional instability}, conscientiousness, agreeableness {versus antagonism} and openness to experience). Irrespective of age, gender or culture, all adults share these same basic personality traits, although individuals

Table 1  
Situational strength components (Adapted from Meyer *et al.*, 2010)

Clarity:	The extent to which cues regarding work-related responsibilities or requirements are available and easy to understand (e.g. through policy and procedures, a climate with well-established norms, and supervisor instructions);
Consistency:	The extent to which cues regarding work-related responsibilities or requirements are compatible with each other (i.e. indications of behavioural appropriateness are uniform between sources and over time);
Constraints:	The extent to which an individual's freedom of decision and action is limited by forces outside his or her control (e.g. via restricting discretion/decision-latitude); and
Consequences:	The extent to which decisions or actions have important positive or negative implications for any relevant person or entity (e.g. result in punishment or reward).

will differ in their relative standing on each of the traits (McCrae and Costa, 2003). Situational strength significantly affects whether normal personality 'manifests' in actual behaviour. For example, someone high in extraversion may be the life of the party typically, but when attending a funeral tone down their behaviour given the strong, serious situational context. In Table 2, we provide dimension and facet descriptions, and examples of Big Five normal personality behaviours.

However, abnormal – aka pathological – personality traits also exist. We deliberately move beyond normality and venture boldly into the dark side of personality and organisational behaviour (Griffin and O'Leary-Kelly, 2004; Kopcsandy and Kiffin-Petersen, 2006) to argue workplace monsters can be profiled in terms of five pathological personalities. These five personalities include three maladaptive, interpersonally malevolent traits collectively known as the 'dark triad' (narcissism, psychopathy and Machiavellianism; Paulhus and Williams, 2002; Jakobwitz and Egan, 2006), the commonly linked trait of sociopathy and antisocial personality.

Individuals with pathological traits may meet the criteria for a personality disorder diagnosis. The Diagnostic Criteria for Mental Health Fifth Edition (DSMV; American Psychiatric Association, 2013) identify ten personality disorders, divided into three clusters. Each disorder shares the four core diagnostic characteristics of: (i) distorted thinking patterns; (ii) problematic emotional responses; (iii) over- or under-regulated impulse control; and (iv) interpersonal difficulties. Of particular interest to our discussion is Cluster B, otherwise known as the dramatic, emotional and erratic cluster. Cluster B holds four disorders, two of which are narcissistic personality disorder (NPD), and antisocial personality disorder (ASPD; which incorporates both Sociopathy and Psychopathy).

In addition to the presence of pathological traits, the thought, feeling and behavioural patterns of individuals with personality disorders differ from social

Table 2  
Normal (Big Five) traits, dimensions, facets and sample behavioural patterns

Dimension	Facets/Sample behavioural patterns
<p><b>Extraversion</b> is marked by pronounced engagement with the external world. Extraverts enjoy being with people, are full of energy and often experience positive emotions. They tend to be enthusiastic, action-oriented, individuals who are likely to say 'Yes!' or 'Let's go!' to opportunities for excitement. In groups, they like to talk, assert themselves and draw attention to themselves</p> <p>Introverts lack the exuberance, energy and activity levels of extraverts. They tend to be quiet, low-key, deliberate and disengaged from the social world. Their lack of social involvement should not be interpreted as shyness or depression; the introvert simply needs less stimulation than an extravert and prefers to be alone. The independence and reserve of the introvert are sometimes mistaken as unfriendliness or arrogance. In reality, an introvert who scores high on the agreeableness dimension will not seek others out but will be quite pleasant when approached</p>	<p>Friendly people genuinely like other people and openly demonstrate positive feelings towards others. They make friends quickly, and it is easy for them to form close, intimate relationships. Low scorers on friendliness are not necessarily cold and hostile, but they do not reach out to others and are perceived as distant and reserved</p> <p><b>Sample behavioural patterns</b> Makes friends easily Feels comfortable around people Seeks (rather than avoids) contact with others Does not keep others at a distance</p> <p><b>Gregariousness</b> Gregarious people find the company of others pleasantly stimulating and rewarding. They enjoy the excitement of crowds. Low scorers tend to feel overwhelmed by and therefore actively avoid, large crowds. They do not necessarily dislike being with people sometimes, but their need for privacy and time to themselves is much greater than for individuals who score high on this scale</p> <p><b>Sample behavioural Patterns</b> Loves large parties Talks to a lot of different people at parties Prefers to be around others, rather than alone Does not avoid crowds</p> <p><b>Assertiveness</b> High scorers on assertiveness like to speak out, take charge and direct the activities of others. They tend to be leaders in groups. Low scorers tend not to talk much and let others control the activities of groups</p> <p><b>Sample behavioural patterns</b> Takes charge Tries to lead others Take control of things Does not wait for others to lead the way</p> <p><b>Activity level</b> Active individuals lead fast-paced, busy lives. They move about quickly, energetically and vigorously, and they are involved in many activities. People who score low on this scale follow a slower and more leisurely, relaxed pace</p> <p><b>Sample behavioural patterns</b> Is always busy Is always on the go Does a lot in their spare time Does not like to take it easy</p> <p><b>Excitement-seeking</b> High scorers on this scale are easily bored without high levels of stimulation. They love bright lights and hustle and bustle. They are likely to take risks and seek thrills. Low scorers are overwhelmed by noise and commotion and are adverse to thrill-seeking</p>

(continued)

Table 2 (continued)

Dimension	Facets/Sample behavioural patterns
<b>Sample behavioural patterns</b>	<b>Sample behavioural patterns</b>
Loves excitement	Loves excitement
Seeks adventure	Seeks adventure
Enjoys being reckless	Enjoys being reckless
Acts wild and crazy	Acts wild and crazy
<b>Cheerfulness</b>	<b>Cheerfulness</b>
This scale measures positive mood and feelings, not negative emotions (which are a part of the neuroticism domain). Persons who score high on this scale typically experience a range of positive feelings, including happiness, enthusiasm, optimism and joy. Low scorers are not as prone to such energetic, high spirits	This scale measures positive mood and feelings, not negative emotions (which are a part of the neuroticism domain). Persons who score high on this scale typically experience a range of positive feelings, including happiness, enthusiasm, optimism and joy. Low scorers are not as prone to such energetic, high spirits
<b>Sample behavioural patterns</b>	<b>Sample behavioural patterns</b>
Radiates joy	Radiates joy
Has a lot of fun	Has a lot of fun
Loves life	Loves life
Looks at the bright side of life	Looks at the bright side of life
<b>Trust</b>	<b>Trust</b>
A person with high trust assumes that most people are fair, honest and have good intentions. Persons low in trust see others as selfish, devious and potentially dangerous	A person with high trust assumes that most people are fair, honest and have good intentions. Persons low in trust see others as selfish, devious and potentially dangerous
<b>Sample Behavioural Patterns</b>	<b>Sample Behavioural Patterns</b>
Trusts people	Trusts people
Believes that others have good intentions	Believes that others have good intentions
Trusts what people say	Trusts what people say
Does not distrust others	Does not distrust others
<b>Morality</b>	<b>Morality</b>
High scorers on this scale see no need for pretense or manipulation when dealing with others and are therefore candid, frank and sincere. Low scorers believe that a certain amount of deception in social relationships is necessary. People find it relatively easy to relate to the straightforward high scorers on this scale. They generally find it more difficult to relate to the straightforward low scorers on this scale. It should be made clear that low scorers are not unprincipled or immoral; they are simply more guarded and less willing to openly reveal the whole truth	High scorers on this scale see no need for pretense or manipulation when dealing with others and are therefore candid, frank and sincere. Low scorers believe that a certain amount of deception in social relationships is necessary. People find it relatively easy to relate to the straightforward high scorers on this scale. They generally find it more difficult to relate to the straightforward low scorers on this scale. It should be made clear that low scorers are not unprincipled or immoral; they are simply more guarded and less willing to openly reveal the whole truth
<b>Sample behavioural patterns</b>	<b>Sample behavioural patterns</b>
Does not use others for their own ends	Does not use others for their own ends
Does not cheat to get ahead	Does not cheat to get ahead
Does not take advantage of others	Does not take advantage of others
Does not obstruct others plans	Does not obstruct others plans
<b>Altruism</b>	<b>Altruism</b>
Altruistic people find helping other people genuinely rewarding. Consequently, they are generally willing to assist those who are in need. Altruistic people find that doing things for others is a form of self-fulfilment rather than self-sacrifice. Low scorers on this scale do not particularly like helping those in need. Requests for help feel like an imposition rather than an opportunity for self-fulfilment	Altruistic people find helping other people genuinely rewarding. Consequently, they are generally willing to assist those who are in need. Altruistic people find that doing things for others is a form of self-fulfilment rather than self-sacrifice. Low scorers on this scale do not particularly like helping those in need. Requests for help feel like an imposition rather than an opportunity for self-fulfilment

(continued)



Table 2 (continued)

Dimension	Facets/Sample behavioural patterns
<b>Sample behavioural patterns</b>	Loves to help others Is concerned about others Takes time for others Is not indifferent to feelings of others
<b>Cooperation</b>	Individuals who score high on this scale dislike confrontations. They are perfectly willing to compromise or to deny their own needs in order to get along with others. Those who score low on this scale are more likely to intimidate others to get their way
<b>Sample behavioural patterns</b>	Does not like a good fight Does not yell at others Does not insult others Does not get back at others
<b>Modesty</b>	High scorers on this scale do not like to claim that they are better than other people. In some cases, this attitude may derive from low self-confidence or self-esteem. Nonetheless, some people with high self-esteem find immodesty unseemly. Those who are willing to describe themselves as superior tend to be seen as disagreeably arrogant by other people
<b>Sample behavioural patterns</b>	Does not believe they are better than others Does not think overly highly of themselves Does not have a high opinion of themselves Does not boast about their virtues
<b>Sympathy</b>	People who score high on this scale are tenderhearted and compassionate. They feel the pain of others vicariously and are easily moved to pity. Low scorers are not affected strongly by human suffering. They pride themselves on making objective judgements based on reason. They are more concerned with truth and impartial justice than with mercy
<b>Sample behavioural patterns</b>	Sympathises with the homeless Feels sympathy for those who are worse off than themselves Is interested in other people's problems Does not avoid thinking about the needy
<b>Self-efficacy</b>	Self-efficacy describes confidence in one's ability to accomplish things. High scorers believe they have the intelligence (common sense), drive and self-control necessary for achieving success. Low scorers do not feel effective and may have a sense that they are not in control of their lives
<b>Conscientiousness</b> concerns the way in which we control, regulate and direct our impulses. Impulses are not inherently bad; occasionally time constraints require a snap decision, and	(continued)

Table 2 (continued)

Dimension	Facets/Sample behavioural patterns
<p>acting on our first impulse can be an effective response. Also, in times of play rather than work, acting spontaneously and impulsively can be fun. Impulsive individuals can be seen by others as colourful, fun-to-be-with and zany</p>	<p><b>Sample behavioural patterns</b>            Completes their tasks effectively            Excels in what they do            Handles tasks smoothly            Knows how to get things done  <b>Orderliness</b>            Persons with high scores on orderliness are well-organised. They like to live according to routines and schedules. They keep lists and make plans. Low scorers tend to be disorganised and scattered</p>
<p>Nonetheless, acting on impulse can lead to trouble in a number of ways. Some impulses are antisocial. Uncontrolled antisocial acts not only harm other members of society, but also can result in retribution towards the perpetrator of such impulsive acts. Another problem with impulsive acts is that they often produce immediate rewards but undesirable, long-term consequences. Examples include excessive socialising that leads to being fired from one's job, hurling an insult that causes the breakup of an important relationship or using pleasure-inducing drugs that eventually destroy one's health</p>	<p><b>Sample behavioural patterns</b>            Likes to tidy up            Does not forget to put things back in their proper place            Does not leave a mess in their room            Does not leave their belongings around</p>
<p>Impulsive behaviour, even when not seriously destructive, diminishes a person's effectiveness in significant ways. Acting impulsively disallows contemplating alternative courses of action, some of which would have been wiser than the impulsive choice. Impulsivity also sidetracks people during projects that require organised sequences of steps or stages.</p>	<p><b>Dutifulness</b>            This scale reflects the strength of a person's sense of duty and obligation. Those who score high on this scale have a strong sense of moral obligation. Low scorers find contracts, rules and regulations overly confining. They are likely to be seen as unreliable or even irresponsible</p> <p><b>Sample behavioural patterns</b>            Keeps their promises            Tells the truth            Does not break promises            Does not break rules</p>
<p>Impulsive behaviour, even when not seriously destructive, diminishes a person's effectiveness in significant ways. Acting impulsively disallows contemplating alternative courses of action, some of which would have been wiser than the impulsive choice. Impulsivity also sidetracks people during projects that require organised sequences of steps or stages. Accomplishments of an impulsive person are therefore small, scattered and inconsistent</p> <p>A hallmark of intelligence, what potentially separates human beings from earlier life forms, is the ability to think about future consequences before acting on an impulse. Intelligent activity involves contemplation of long-range goals, organising and planning</p>	<p><b>Achievement-striving</b>            Individuals who score high on this scale strive hard to achieve excellence. Their drive to be recognised as successful keeps them on track towards their lofty goals. They often have a strong sense of direction in life, but extremely high scores may be too single-minded and obsessed with their work. Low scorers are content to get by with a minimal amount of work and might be seen by others as lazy</p> <p><b>Sample behavioural patterns</b>            Works hard            Does more than what is expected of them            Does not do just enough to get by            Puts a lot of time and effort into their work  <b>Self-discipline</b>            Self-discipline – what many people call will-power – refers to the ability to persist at difficult or unpleasant tasks until they are completed. People who possess high self-discipline are able to overcome reluctance to begin tasks and stay on track despite distractions. Those with low self-discipline procrastinate and show poor follow-through, often failing to complete tasks-even tasks they want very much to complete</p>

(continued)

Table 2 (continued)

Dimension	Facets/Sample behavioural patterns
<p>routes to these goals, and persisting towards one's goals in the face of short-lived impulses to the contrary. The idea that intelligence involves impulse control is nicely captured by the term prudence, an alternative label for the conscientiousness domain. Prudent means both wise and cautious. Persons who score high on the Conscientiousness scale are, in fact, perceived by others as intelligent. The benefits of high conscientiousness are obvious. Conscientious individuals avoid trouble and achieve high levels of success through purposeful planning and persistence. They are also positively regarded by others as intelligent and reliable. On the negative side, they can be compulsive perfectionists and workaholics. Furthermore, extremely conscientious individuals might be regarded as stuffy and boring. Unconscientious people may be criticised for their unreliability, lack of ambition and failure to stay within the lines, but they will experience many short-lived pleasures, and they will never be called stuffy.</p>	<p><b>Sample behavioural patterns</b> Is always prepared Carries out their plans Does not waste time Does not have difficulty starting tasks</p> <p><b>Cautiousness</b> Cautiousness describes the disposition to think through possibilities before acting. High scorers on the Cautiousness scale take their time when making decisions. Low scorers often say or do first thing that comes to mind without deliberating alternatives and the probable consequences of those alternatives</p> <p><b>Sample behavioural patterns</b> Does not jump into things without thinking Does not make rash decisions Does not rush into things Does not act without thinking</p>
<p><b>Neuroticism</b> Freud originally used the term neurosis to describe a condition marked by mental distress, emotional suffering and an inability to cope effectively with the normal demands of life. He suggested that everyone shows some signs of neurosis, but that we differ in our degree of suffering and our specific symptoms of distress. Today neuroticism refers to the tendency to experience negative feelings. Those who score high on neuroticism may experience primarily one specific negative feeling such as anxiety, anger or depression, but are likely to experience several of these emotions</p>	<p><b>Anxiety</b> The 'fight-or-flight' system of the brain of anxious individuals is too easily and too often engaged. Therefore, people who are high in anxiety often feel like something dangerous is about to happen. They may be afraid of specific situations or be just generally fearful. They feel tense, jittery and nervous. Persons low in anxiety are generally calm and fearless</p> <p><b>Sample behavioural patterns</b> Worries about things Fears for the worst Is afraid of many things Gets stressed out easily</p> <p><b>Anger</b> Persons who score high in anger feel enraged when things do not go their way. They are sensitive about being treated fairly and feel resentful and bitter when they feel they are being cheated. This scale measures the tendency to feel angry, whether or not the person expresses annoyance and hostility depends on the individual's level of agreeableness. Low scorers do not get angry often or easily</p> <p><b>Sample behavioural patterns</b></p>

(continued)

Table 2 (continued)

Dimension	Facets/Sample behavioural patterns
<p>People high in neuroticism are emotionally reactive. They respond emotionally to events that would not affect most people, and their reactions tend to be more intense than normal. They are more likely to interpret ordinary situations as threatening, and minor frustrations as hopelessly difficult. Their negative emotional reactions tend to persist for unusually long periods of time, which means they are often in a bad mood. These problems in emotional regulation can diminish a neurotic's ability to think clearly, make decisions and cope effectively with stress. At the other end of the scale, individuals who score low in neuroticism are less easily upset and are less emotionally reactive. They tend to be calm, emotionally stable and free from persistent negative feelings. Freedom from negative feelings does not mean that low scorers experience a lot of positive feelings; frequency of positive emotions is a component of the Extraversion domain</p>	<p>Get angry easily Gets irritated easily Loses their temper Is easily annoyed</p> <p><b>Depression</b> This scale measures the tendency to feel sad, dejected and discouraged. High scorers lack energy and have difficult initiating activities. Low scorers tend to be free from these depressive feelings</p> <p><b>Sample behavioural patterns</b> Often feels blue Is often down on things Does not feel comfortable with themselves Dislikes themselves</p> <p><b>Self-consciousness</b> Self-conscious individuals are sensitive about what others think of them. Their concern about rejection and ridicule causes them to feel shy and uncomfortable around others. They are easily embarrassed and often feel ashamed. Their fears that others will criticise or make fun of them are exaggerated and unrealistic, but their awkwardness and discomfort may make these fears a self-fulfilling prophecy. Low scorers, in contrast, do not suffer from the mistaken impression that everyone is watching and judging them. They do not feel nervous in social situations</p> <p><b>Sample behavioural patterns</b> Finds it difficult to approach others Only feel comfortable with friends Is bothered by social situations Is afraid to draw attention to themselves</p>
<p><b>Immoderation</b> Immoderate individuals feel strong cravings and urges that they have difficulty resisting. They tend to be oriented towards short-term pleasures and rewards rather than long-term consequences. Low scorers do not experience strong, irresistible cravings and consequently do not find themselves tempted to overindulge</p> <p><b>Sample behavioural patterns</b> Goes out on binges Often overindulges Finds it difficult to resist temptations Finds it hard to control cravings</p>	<p>pleasures and rewards rather than long-term consequences. Low scorers do not experience strong, irresistible cravings and consequently do not find themselves tempted to overindulge</p>
<p><b>Vulnerability</b> High scorers on vulnerability experience panic, confusion and helplessness when under pressure or stress. Low scorers feel more poised, confident and clear-thinking when stressed</p> <p><b>Sample behavioural patterns</b></p>	<p>High scorers on vulnerability experience panic, confusion and helplessness when under pressure or stress. Low scorers feel more poised, confident and clear-thinking when stressed</p>

(continued)

Table 2 (continued)

Dimension	Facets/Sample behavioural patterns
<p><b>Openness to experience</b> describes a dimension of cognitive style that distinguishes imaginative, creative people from down-to-earth, conventional people. Open people are intellectually curious, appreciative of art and sensitive to beauty. They tend to be compared to closed people, more aware of their feelings. They tend to think and act in individualistic and nonconforming ways. Intellectuals typically score high on openness to experience; consequently, this factor has also been called culture or intellect</p> <p>Nonetheless, intellect is probably best regarded as one aspect of openness to experience. Scores on openness to experience are only modestly related to years of education and scores on standard intelligent tests</p> <p>Another characteristic of the open cognitive style is a facility for thinking in symbols and abstractions far removed from concrete experience. Depending on the individual-specific intellectual abilities, this symbolic cognition may take the form of mathematical, logical or geometric thinking, artistic and metaphorical use of language, music composition or performance, or one of the many visual or performing arts</p> <p>People with low scores on openness to experience tend to have narrow, common interests. They prefer the plain,</p>	<p>Panics easily</p> <p>Becomes overwhelmed by events</p> <p>Feels that they are unable to deal with things</p> <p>Struggles to remain calm under pressure</p> <p><b>Imagination</b></p> <p>To imaginative individuals, the real world is often too plain and ordinary. High scorers on this scale use fantasy as a way of creating a richer, more interesting world. Low scorers are on this scale are more oriented to facts than fantasy</p> <p><b>Sample behavioural patterns</b></p> <p>Has a vivid imagination</p> <p>Enjoys wild flights of fantasy</p> <p>Loves to daydream</p> <p>Likes to get lost in thought</p> <p><b>Artistic interests</b></p> <p>High scorers on this scale love beauty, both in art and in nature. They become easily involved and absorbed in artistic and natural events. They are not necessarily artistically trained nor talented, although many will be. The defining features of this scale are interest in, and appreciation of natural and artificial beauty. Low scorers lack aesthetic sensitivity and interest in the arts</p> <p><b>Sample behavioural patterns</b></p> <p>Believes in the importance of art</p> <p>Sees beauty in things others might not notice</p> <p>Likes poetry</p> <p>Enjoys going to art museums</p> <p><b>Emotionality</b></p> <p>Persons high on emotionality have good access to and awareness of their own feelings. Low scorers are less aware of their feelings and tend not to express their emotions openly</p> <p><b>Sample behavioural patterns</b></p> <p>Experiences emotions intensely</p> <p>Feels others emotions</p> <p>Often notices their emotional reactions</p> <p>Understands people who get emotional</p> <p><b>Adventurousness</b></p> <p>High scorers on adventurousness are eager to try new activities, travel to foreign lands, and experience different things. They find familiarity and routine boring and will take a new route home just because it is different. Low scorers tend to feel uncomfortable with change and prefer familiar routines</p> <p><b>Sample behavioural patterns</b></p>

(continued)

Table 2 (continued)

Dimension	Facets/Sample behavioural patterns
<p>straightforward and obvious over the complex, ambiguous and subtle. They may regard the arts and sciences with suspicion, regarding these endeavours as abstruse or of familiarity over novelty; they are conservative and resistant to change</p> <p>Openness is often presented as healthier or more mature by psychologists, who are often themselves open to experience. However, open and closed styles of thinking are useful in different environments. The intellectual style of the open person may serve a professor well, but research has shown that closed thinking is related to superior job performance in police work, sales and a number of service occupations</p>	<p>Prefers variety to routine</p> <p>Likes changes</p> <p>Prefers not to stick with things they know</p> <p>Not attached to conventional ways</p> <p><b>Intellect</b></p> <p>Intellect and artistic interests are the two most important, central aspects of openness to experience. High scorers on intellect love to play with ideas. They are open-minded to new and unusual ideas and like to debate intellectual issues. They enjoy riddles, puzzles and brain teasers. Low scorers on intellect prefer dealing with either people or things rather than ideas. They regard intellectual exercises as a waste of time. Intellect should not be equated with intelligence. Intellect is an intellectual style, not an intellectual ability, although high scorers on Intellect score slightly higher than low-intellect individuals on standardised intelligence tests</p> <p><b>Sample behavioural patterns</b></p> <p>Loves to read challenging material</p> <p>Does not have difficulty understanding abstract ideas</p> <p>Is interested in theoretical discussions</p> <p>Does not avoid philosophical discussions</p> <p><b>Liberalism</b></p> <p>Psychological liberalism refers to a readiness to challenge authority, convention and traditional values. In its most extreme form, psychological liberalism can even represent outright hostility towards rules, sympathy for law-breakers and love of ambiguity, chaos and disorder. Psychological conservatives prefer the security and stability brought by conformity to tradition. Psychological liberalism and conservatism are not identical to political affiliation, but certainly incline individuals towards certain political parties</p> <p><b>Sample behavioural patterns</b></p> <p>Tends to vote for liberal political candidates</p> <p>Believes there is no absolute right or wrong</p> <p>Does not tend to vote for conservative political candidates</p> <p>Does not believe we should be tough on crime</p>

Sample behavioural patterns adapted from Johnson (2014), who wrote descriptions of the five domains and thirty subdomains. Dimension and facet descriptions are direct extracts from a IPIP 300 generated, online Big Five Report.

norms and expectations and are frequently associated with significant personal, social and work- and employment-related disruption. These patterns are ego-syntonic, which means they help preserve the individual's ego because they align with or are acceptable to the needs and goals of the ego, and or are in harmony with one's ideal self-image, and therefore perceived *by the individual* to be appropriate or desirable (Aardema and O'Connor, 2007). The patterns are also archetypally pervasive and inflexible across many situations (a key disorder diagnostic criterion), meaning the influence of situational factors is essentially removed. Relatively stable trait expression over time is another diagnostic requirement. The DSMV describe these patterns and disruptions as impairments in self- and interpersonal-functioning. In Table 3, we outline the NPD and ASPD criteria (the latter incorporating sociopathy and psychopathy characteristics), with Machiavellian personality characteristics implicit across both disorders.

Between broad normal and abnormal personality resides a 'subclinical' category, which includes patterns associated with pathological traits exhibited by individuals that do not meet the full diagnostic criteria for a disorder (Stetka and Correll, 2013). Subclinical essentially refers to a pathological personality trait that provides some benefits *to the individual*. Note that it is normal for any of us to engage on occasion in some of the behaviour associated pathological personalities. Narcissism, for example, is a normal personality trait consisting of three factors: leadership/authority (generally linked to adaptive outcomes), grandiose exhibitionism and entitlement/exploitativeness (generally linked to maladaptive outcomes; Ackerman *et al.*, 2010). A narcissist can be thought of in normal, Big Five personality terms as a 'disagreeable extravert' (Paulhus, 2001, p. 228). However, narcissism can also exist in the subclinical space, and as a personality disorder.

Our workplace monster discussion is centred on pathological traits at disorder and subclinical levels because, by condition and definition, these personalities *will* engage in interpersonal deviance acts against other employees at work; they are what we classify as unwavering monsters. In the line with our inevitability assertion, research has found that psychopaths engage in morally inappropriate behaviour because they do not care about such knowledge, nor the consequences that follow from their behaviour; not because they do not understand right from wrong (Cima *et al.*, 2010).

Despite their toxic conduct, dark triad monsters are known to thrive in corporate environments. Research shows these individuals usually get ahead rather than falling behind, with trait level (not disorder) Machiavellianism positively relating to leadership position and career satisfaction, and narcissism positively relating to salary (Spurk *et al.*, 2016). Psychopaths are not identified and dismissed; rather, they are promoted into senior leadership roles where they can actively and easily engage in their behaviours, especially in individualistic settings (Boddy *et al.*, 2010a). These monsters get their way in organisations via differential use of hard (e.g. threats) and soft (e.g. offering

Table 3  
Narcissistic personality disorder and antisocial personality disorder diagnostic criteria

<b>Narcissistic personality disorder</b>	<p><b>Significant impairments in personality functioning manifest by:</b></p> <p>1 <b>Impairments in self-functioning (a or b):</b></p> <p>a <b>Identity:</b> Excessive reference to others for self-definition and self-esteem regulation; exaggerated self-appraisal may be inflated or deflated, or vacillate between extremes; emotional regulation mirrors fluctuations in self-esteem.</p> <p>b <b>Self-direction:</b> Goal-setting is based on gaining approval from others; personal standards are unreasonably high in order to see oneself as exceptional, or too low based on a sense of entitlement; often unaware of own motivations.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">AND</p> <p>2 <b>Impairments in interpersonal functioning (a or b):</b></p> <p>a <b>Empathy:</b> Impaired ability to recognise or identify with the feelings and needs of others; excessively attuned to reactions of others, but only if perceived as relevant to self; over- or underestimate of own effect on others.</p> <p>b <b>Intimacy:</b> Relationships largely superficial and exist to serve self-esteem regulation; mutuality constrained by little genuine interest in others experiences and predominance of a need for personal gain.</p> <p><b>B. Pathological personality traits in the following domain:</b></p> <p>1 <b>Antagonism</b>, characterised by:</p> <p>a <b>Grandiosity:</b> Feelings of entitlement, either overt or covert; self-centeredness; firmly holding to the belief that one is better than others; condescending towards others.</p> <p>b <b>Attention seeking:</b> Excessive attempts to attract and be the focus of the attention of others; admiration seeking.</p>
<b>Antisocial personality</b>	<p><b>Impairments in self-functioning (a or b):</b></p> <p>a <b>Identity:</b> Egocentrism; self-esteem derived from personal gain, power or pleasure.</p> <p>b <b>Self-direction:</b> Goal-setting based on personal gratification; absence of prosocial internal standards associated with failure to conform to lawful or culturally normative ethical behaviour.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">AND</p> <p>2 <b>Impairments in interpersonal functioning (a or b):</b></p> <p>a <b>Empathy:</b> Lack of concern for feelings, needs or suffering of others; lack of remorse after hurting or mistreating another.</p> <p>b <b>Intimacy:</b> Incapacity for mutually intimate relationships, as exploitation is a primary means of relating to others, including by deceit and coercion; use of dominance or intimidation to control others.</p> <p><b>Pathological personality traits in the following domains:</b></p> <p>1 <b>Antagonism</b>, characterised by:</p>

(continued)



Table 3 (continued)

- 
- a **Manipulativeness:** Frequent use of subterfuge to influence or control others; use of seduction, charm, glibness or ingratiation to achieve one's ends.
  - b **Deceitfulness:** Dishonesty and fraudulence; misrepresentation of self; embellishment or fabrication when relating events.
  - c **Callousness:** Lack of concern for feelings or problems of others; lack of guilt or remorse about the negative or harmful effects of one's actions on others; aggression; sadism.
  - d **Hostility:** Persistent or frequent angry feelings; anger or irritability in response to minor slights and insults; mean, nasty or vengeful behaviour.
- 2 **Disinhibition, characterised by:**
- a **Irresponsibility:** Disregard for – and failure to honour – financial and other obligations or commitments; lack of respect for – and lack of follow through on – agreements and promises.
  - b **Impulsivity:** Acting on the spur of the moment in response to immediate stimuli; acting on a momentary basis without a plan or consideration of outcomes; difficulty establishing and following plans.
  - c **Risk taking:** Engagement in dangerous, risky and potentially self-damaging activities, unnecessarily and without regard for consequences; boredom proneness and thoughtless initiation of activities to counter boredom; lack of concern for one's limitations and denial of the reality of personal danger.
- 

Extracted directly from DSMV (American Psychiatric Association; 2013, online version).

compliments) workplace manipulation tactics (Jonason *et al.*, 2012). Even if 'spotted', they are undeterred from behaving in inappropriate ways, rendering them nigh on impossible to discipline and or control. ASPD monsters, for example, struggle to learn from mistakes and are typically unresponsive to punishment (De Brito *et al.*, 2013). Unfortunately for victims and employers, the belief system of a workplace monster views the organisational constraints and consequences that provide situational influence over normal personality employees as nothing but a rudimentary function of a group to which they do not belong, because they are 'special.' In other words, workplace rules and behavioural norms simply do not apply to them.

To facilitate understanding of what is to a nonpsychiatrist or psychologist quite complex human behaviour, in Table 4, we provide descriptive definitions of typified patterns for each of the five monster personalities. In Figure 1a–c, we summarise how both normal and abnormal personalities and the extent to which they are situationally influenced forms the basis of our workplace

Table 4  
Descriptive patterns of the five workplace monster personalities

Workplace monster personality	Descriptive definition
Antisocial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shows a pervasive pattern of disregard for and violation of the rights of others</li> <li>• Makes decisions driven purely by their own desires without considering the needs of others nor the negative effects their actions have on others</li> <li>• Behaves in unethical and irresponsible ways</li> <li>• Frequently violates social norms and expectations</li> <li>• Has an impaired moral conscience</li> <li>• Has an inflated self-image</li> <li>• Highly manipulative and lacks empathy</li> <li>• Hurts others and has little regard for the safety of others</li> <li>• Can behave in criminal ways, ways that would be grounds for arrest/prosecution, or skirt/flout the edges of law</li> <li>• Fails to plan ahead and is highly impulsive</li> <li>• Constantly lies and deceives others to achieve their own ends</li> <li>• Can be prone to aggressiveness and fighting</li> <li>• Does not feel remorse or guilt</li> </ul>
Psychopathy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Displays disregard for laws, social mores and the rights of others</li> <li>• Lacking in empathy, remorse and guilt</li> <li>• Very manipulative and can easily gain the trust of others</li> <li>• Is unable to say sorry despite clear evidence of wrongdoing and or causing distress to others</li> <li>• Follows an unstable, antisocial lifestyle</li> <li>• Has an arrogant and deceitful interpersonal style</li> <li>• Has an impulsive and irresponsible behavioural style</li> <li>• Displays selfishness and callousness</li> <li>• Is unable to form genuine emotional attachments</li> <li>• Is superficially charming and disarming</li> <li>• Often well-educated and hold steady jobs</li> <li>• Is deficient in emotional experience, but learns to fake and mimic emotions to appear normal to unsuspecting people</li> <li>• Meticulous in terms of detail, organised and often develop contingency plans</li> <li>• Gives impression of being cool and calm</li> <li>• Make excellent white-collar criminals and con artists</li> <li>• May display hostile aggression and violence</li> <li>• Genetically based (nature – born, not made)</li> </ul>
Sociopathy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shares a number of but not all the characteristics of psychopaths</li> <li>• Displays disregard for laws, social mores and the rights of others</li> <li>• Manipulates and uses others in whatever way they see fit</li> <li>• Emotionally detached and lacking in empathy</li> <li>• Lacking in remorse and guilt</li> <li>• Preoccupied with meeting their own needs</li> </ul>

(continued)

**Table 4** (continued)

Workplace monster personality	Descriptive definition
Narcissistic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not recognise fear like a normal person</li> <li>• Tends to display violent behaviour and can rarely stay out of trouble</li> <li>• Tends to be nervous and easily agitated, prone to outburst of emotion and rage</li> <li>• Often uneducated and unable to hold down a steady job</li> <li>• Find it difficult but not impossible to form attachment to others</li> <li>• Tends to be haphazard, disorganised and spontaneous rather than planned</li> <li>• Environmentally based (nurture – made, not born)</li> <li>• Pervasive pattern of grandiosity</li> <li>• Need to feel powerful and admired</li> <li>• Seek and enjoy associating with famous and special people because it gives them a sense of importance</li> <li>• Have an extreme sense of entitlement</li> <li>• Believe that they are special and deserve special treatment</li> <li>• Manipulative in getting attention from others</li> <li>• Interpersonally exploitative and use their understanding of other’s needs for their own self-advancement</li> <li>• Display a perceived or real lack of empathy</li> <li>• Engage in superficial relationships that are devoid of real intimacy and caring</li> <li>• Fundamentally disregard and disrespect the worth of others</li> <li>• Impulsive</li> <li>• Have a haughty and arrogant attitude</li> <li>• Feel devastated when their normal, average human limitations are realised</li> <li>• Create conflict with others who feel exploited and who dislike being treated in a condescending fashion</li> <li>• Quickly shift between overidealising to devaluing others</li> <li>• Can be high-functioning subtype – able to use their exhibitionistic, autonomous and competitive, arrogant, grandiose and exaggerated sense of self-importance to succeed, for example at work</li> <li>• Can be grandiose/overt subtype – thick-skinned, arrogant, entitled and demonstrate little observable anxiety, extraverted, attention-seeking, superficially charming and socially adept</li> <li>• Can be aggressive or intimidating, especially when threatened</li> <li>• May act out sexually to increase their self-esteem</li> </ul>
Machiavellian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Holds a cynical view concerning human nature</li> <li>• Distrusts others</li> <li>• Self-interested</li> <li>• Believes manipulating others is an effective way to achieve own goals</li> <li>• Desires control and status</li> <li>• Has a moral outlook that values expediency over principle</li> <li>• Often displays amorality</li> </ul>

(continued)

**Table 4** (continued)

Workplace monster personality	Descriptive definition
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek personal gains at the expense of others; others as a ‘means to an end’</li> <li>• Exploitative and devious</li> <li>• Frequently lies</li> <li>• Frequently uses flattery, deceit and emotional detachment to manipulate social and interpersonal interactions</li> </ul>

monsters profile, including how these personalities intersect as traits, disorders and dark triad components. To highlight the differences between normal and ‘dark’ (i.e. monster) behaviour, we incorporate and expand Rauthmann and Kolar’s (2013) three evaluation criteria: desirability (the extent trait-behaviours are considered accepted/desirable – to the monster, and we add ‘to others’), consequences for the self (the extent trait-behaviours are beneficial for the own organism) and consequences for others (the extent trait-behaviours are beneficial for others).

Note we are not the first to link problematic personalities to perpetration of interpersonal deviance; this relationship is not a new idea. For example, recent studies have linked the dark triad traits to bullying behaviour (e.g. Baughman *et al.*, 2012), sexual harassment (Zeigler-Hill *et al.* (2016) and supervisory abuse (Wisse and Sleebos, 2016). However, we argue we make a unique contribution to the wider dark side of workplace behaviour and personality research here by contrasting normal versus psychological and psychiatric (disorder and subclinical) personality in relation to situational influences (clarity, consistency, constraints and consequences), and evaluating ‘darkness’ (desirability [to self *and to others*], and consequences of the behaviours for self and others) to show how and why workplace monster behaviour occurs, and why it is detrimental to all bar the monster themselves.

## 2.2. Prevalence – monsters work amongst us

Having outlined who and what constitutes a workplace monster according to our interpersonal deviance perpetrator characterisation, and why we consider them unwavering, we move on to prevalence. According to Clark (2005, 2009), about 10 percent of the adult employed population display the characteristics of what he refers to as organisational psychopaths. Well-informed estimations aside, we examined prevalence rates research in an effort to provide a robust, evidence-based likelihood or ‘risk’ any given organisation employs one or more workplace monsters. Note previous research has established prevalence data in a variety of samples, including but not limited to normal adults (i.e. in the

a) Normal Personality

SITUATIONAL STRENGTH ELEMENT IMPACT				
Clarity Consistency Constraints Consequences	All Low – High; Organizationally dependent			
	DARKNESS EVALUATION			
Dimension/Facet	Desirability/Acceptability – Self	Desirability/Acceptability – Others	Consequences – Self	Consequences – Others
E - Friendliness	0	+	+	+
E - Gregariousness	0	0	0	0
E - Assertiveness	0	0	+	0
E - Activity Level	0	0	0	0
E - Excitement Seeking	0	0	0	0
E - Cheerfulness	0	+	+	+
A - Trust	0	+	0	+
A - Morality	0	+	+	+
A - Altruism	0	+	+	+
A - Cooperation	0	+	0	+
A - Modesty	0	+	0	+
A - Sympathy	0	+	0	+
C - Self-Efficacy	+	0	+	0
C - Orderliness	+	0	+	0
C - Dutifulness	+	0	+	0
C - Achievement-Striving	+	0	0	0
C - Self-Discipline	+	0	+	0
C - Cautiousness	0	0	0	0
N - Anxiety	-	-	-	-
N - Anger	-	-	-	-
N - Depression	-	-	-	-
N - Self-Consciousness	-	0	-	0
N - Immoderation	0	0	0	0
N - Vulnerability	-	0	-	0
O - Imagination	0	0	0	0
O - Artistic interests	0	0	0	0
O - Emotionality	0	0	0	0
O - Adventurousness	0	0	0	0
O - Intellect	+	+	+	0
O - Liberalism	0	0	0	0
Narcissism	+	-	+	-
Machiavellianism	+	-	+	-

b) Sub-Clinical

SITUATIONAL STRENGTH ELEMENT IMPACT				
Clarity Consistency Constraints Consequences	Both Low – High; Selectively organizationally dependent and individually dependent on whether being Low to High serves personal needs/desires/goals			
	Both Low – Moderate; Selectively organizationally dependent and individually dependent on whether being Low to Moderate serves personal needs/desires/goals			
DARKNESS EVALUATION				
Dimension/Facet	Desirability/Acceptability – Self	Desirability/Acceptability – Others	Consequences – Self	Consequences – Others
Narcissism	+	-	+	-
Antisocial Personality	+	-	+	-
Psychopathy	+	-	+	-
Sociopathy	+	-	+	-
Machiavellianism	+	-	+	-

c) Disorder

SITUATIONAL STRENGTH ELEMENT IMPACT				
Clarity Consistency Constraints Consequences	All four Nil – Low; Behavior patterns only very selectively individually dependent on whether Low might serve personal needs/desires/goals			
	DARKNESS EVALUATION			
Dimension/Facet	Desirability/Acceptability – Self	Desirability/Acceptability – Others	Consequences – Self	Consequences – Others
Narcissism	+	-	+	-
Antisocial Personality	+	-	+	-
Psychopathy	+	-	+	-
Sociopathy	+	-	+	-
Machiavellianism	+	-	+	-

Figure 1 (a–c): Situational strength impact and darkness evaluation for normal, subclinical and disordered personality.

E = extraversion, A = agreeableness, N = neuroticism, C = conscientiousness, O = openness to experience. + = Scoring high on this facet is generally positive, subject to situational context, ~ = Scoring high on this facet is neutral (whether useful/positive depends on other factors such as whether others enjoy being the recipient of or value that facet and situational context), – = Scoring high on this facet is generally negative, subject to situational context.

general/community population; nonclinical), offenders (i.e. incarcerated) and the mentally ill (i.e. in- or out-patients; clinical).

ASPD prevalence and NPD prevalence within the general population is of the most interest to this part of our discussion. Specifically, research shows prevalence rates for NPD based on a full clinical assessment range from 0 to 6.2 percent across different community samples, with a mean of 1.06 percent (Dhawan *et al.*, 2010). Importantly in terms of research finding generalisability, the highest prevalence was found in the largest sample study reviewed; a nationally representative *n* of nearly 35,000, in which the prevalence rates were greater for males (7.7 percent) than for females (4.8 percent) (Stinson *et al.*, 2008).

Twelve-month prevalence rates of ASPD in the general population range from 0.3 percent (UK sample; McManus *et al.*, 2009), 0.6 percent (US sample; Lenzenweger *et al.*, 2007), and 0.7 percent (Norway; Torgersen *et al.*, 2001) through to 3.3 percent (Moran *et al.*, 2016). ASPD, which, as outlined earlier, incorporates both psychopathy and sociopathy, is consistently more prevalent amongst males than females (e.g. 4.9 percent versus 1.8 percent, respectively), with less than one in ten (only 6.2 percent) of those who met the criteria for a diagnosis actually believing they had any sort of disorder; Moran *et al.*, 2016).

These findings suggest that the likelihood or ‘risk’ an organisation employs at least one NPD monster is 1.06 in 100. Similarly, the likelihood or ‘risk’ an organisation employs at least one ASPD monster is 1.22 in 100. In other words, an organisation with 100 employees would likely include at least one ASPD monster and one NPD monster. In both instances, the monster is more likely a male, and in the case of ASPD, they are unlikely to consider themselves to have (or be!) a problem.

The accuracy of these likelihoods is supported by previous research that identified disordered traits including psychopathy in fully functioning people (e.g. working in organisations) (Babiak, 1995, 1996, 2000) and found the base rate for clinical levels of psychopathy is three times higher among corporate boards than in the overall population (Boddy *et al.*, 2010b). The likelihoods are also reinforced by the findings of Board and Fritzon (2005), who explored the notion of ‘successful’ psychopaths by examining differences in personality disorder traits across forensic, psychiatric and ‘normal’ (senior business manager/executive) samples. These authors found the personality disorder profile of the senior business manager sample contained significant elements of psychopathic disorder, particularly the emotional components. Further, the mean scores obtained by the ‘normal’ sample crossed over into the score distributions of the mental illness, psychopathic disorder and psychiatric patient samples, with the (entirely male) senior business manager group *equally as likely* as the forensic and psychiatric samples to demonstrate the NPD characteristics of grandiosity, lack of empathy, exploitativeness and independence. These employed monsters were, however, less likely to demonstrate the physical aggression and lack of remorse associated with ASPD, reinforcing our proposition that monsters may be

pathological but be subclinical, and or more skilled at both faking remorse and containing their overtly violent tendencies while at work (refer Figure 1).

Having established their prevalence, we now move on to how one might ascertain they have employed a workplace monster.

### 3. Signs of monsterly presence and activity

Lead and lag indicators are common terms within many performance literatures, including business. Combining five different but interrelated perspectives on organisational performance (stakeholder satisfaction, stakeholder contribution, strategy, process and capability), Neely *et al.* (2002) refer to the acid test of performance measurement systems as being able to answer yes if asked, ‘Do the measures ultimately furnish you with the data needed to answer the questions you need to answer in order to manage effectively?’

Unfortunately, as we outline in this section of our study, once a workplace monster has been hired, the first an organisation is likely to know of their presence is *after* the negative consequences of their conduct manifest. Despite being recommended (de Silva, 2014), few organisations undertake pre-employment screening for dark triad traits such as psychopathy. Thus, no lead indicators or early warning signs exist, leaving organisations to rely on detecting monster presence via various lag indicators, if at all. In this respect, these indicators are not of organisational performance, but rather, under- or reduced performance.

It is well established and, as we argue, accepted, that workplace monsters damage their victims, with 80 percent of bully victims reporting suffering anxiety, 52 percent panic attacks, 49 percent depression and 30 percent post-traumatic stress disorder (Workplace Bullying Institute, 2012). In addition to directly affecting the well-being of their victims, workplace monsters negatively influence both victim attitudes linked to job performance (e.g. reduced job satisfaction; Cortina *et al.* (2001), and lowered organisational commitment; Willness *et al.* (2007)), and job performance itself (Caza and Cortina, 2007; O’Leary-Kelly *et al.*, 2009).

Job performance includes five core components, namely: (i) joining and staying with the organisation, (ii) task performance, (iii) maintaining attendance (and being in a fit state to work), (iv) extra-role behaviour (‘going above and beyond’ for their employer and or other employees) and (v) (not engaging in) deviant behaviours (McShane *et al.*, 2013). Prior research indicates that in response to their interpersonal deviance experiences, victim intentions to turnover and absenteeism rates are increased (Hauge *et al.*, 2010). Victims often engage in deviant, retaliatory acts out of anger and frustration (including being absent unnecessarily; ‘throwing a sickie’), withdraw their effort and cease extra-role behaviours, and or exit their organisation (Michalak *et al.*, 2018).

Research also shows that not only is victim task performance directly affected, but this relationship is partially mediated (made worse) by poor

psychological well-being (Devonish, 2013). Similarly, damaged well-being also leads to increased presenteeism, whereby the victim is physically at work but not fully concentrating on their job (Neto *et al.* (2017), with presenteeism modelled to cost approximately four times absenteeism (KPMG Econtech and Medibank, 2011). High-level absenteeism rates (sick leave in excess of standard employee entitlements) are also significantly higher amongst employees who experience interpersonal deviance compared to nonvictimized employees (Michalak, 2015).

Rarer signs include increased use of employee assistance programs (EAPs) as stressed employees seek help; however, rates of access of these services are typically low, ranging from 3 to 10 percent (Beaton Consulting, 2011). A victim may lodge a formal complaint with human resources about the workplace monster's behaviour; however, complaining is an unusual occurrence and subject to a number of uncommon facilitative conditions being met (Harlos, 2010, Michalak, 2015). Employees may go on stress leave and or lodge a Worker Compensation claim; indeed, the leading cause of mental stress (psychological injuries) at work is work-related harassment and or bullying (ComCare, 2015), with some victims forced to retire completely from the workforce due to disability associated with ill-health (Nielsen *et al.*, 2017). The latter is reflected in total and permanent disability claim costs, which have superannuation and income protection insurance providers taking action

Table 5  
Signs of workplace monster presence and activity

Lag indicators	Longer-term lag indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual sick leave increases</li> <li>• Individual productivity decreases</li> <li>• Increased visits to intranet pages relating to Codes of Conduct, grievance, and harassment, etc.</li> <li>• Presenteeism increases – for example time wasted ‘around water coolers’</li> <li>• Task errors increase</li> <li>• Extra-role behaviour reduces/ceases</li> <li>• Changes in individual staff behaviour – displays signs of stress and negative emotions, including anger and frustration</li> <li>• Immediate colleagues of victim also show signs of stress and negative emotions</li> <li>• Individual employee exits and or transfer requests</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sick leave increases – individual (high-level absenteeism), team and organisational level</li> <li>• Overall team and organisational productivity decreases (presenteeism increases/widget production drops)</li> <li>• EAP usage increases</li> <li>• Staff formal complaints – though rare</li> <li>• Legal action (e.g. stop bullying orders)</li> <li>• Customer/client complaints increase</li> <li>• Professional indemnity claims</li> <li>• Talent attraction/employer branding issues</li> <li>• Employee voluntary turnover increases; potentially ‘on masse’</li> <li>• Poor morale</li> <li>• Disengaged staff</li> <li>• Cultural change towards rude, toxic behaviour as ‘the norm’</li> <li>• Stress leave/psychological injury claims</li> <li>• Early retirement</li> </ul>



recently to alter their policy coverage and near on double their premiums (MediaSuper, 2016).

In Table 5, we provide a summary of human resources analytics that may provide lag indicators of workplace monster presence and activity. Note the longer-term lag indicators are discussed under the upcoming corporate governance section. We progress now to cost considerations.

#### 4. Some prima facie on costs considerations: #ExpenseThat

The cost of organisationally deviant behaviours such as theft, fraud and embezzlement by employees or other parties runs into the of hundreds of billions of dollars each year (Greenberg, 1997; Mangione *et al.*, 1999, 2006; Knowledge@Australian School of Business, 2010). Unnecessary financial losses or expenses detract from organisational efficiency and performance (Richard *et al.*, 2009) and reduce organisational effectiveness (Ostroff and Schmitt, 1993).

However, organisationally deviant acts such as theft, fraud and embezzlement costs are typically tangible. For example, despite some differences existing between generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP), and international financial reporting standards (IFRS), established protocols allow for lost/stolen fixed assets, stores and inventory, and cash and other valuable assets to be expensed. Therefore, these costs and the bottom line impact are captured within the financial statements of an individual business. As the maxim goes, ‘What gets measured matters’, with interventions put in place to address excessive or unwarranted costs, and reductions in theft, damaged inventory and the like permitting a return-on-investment analysis.

Workplace monsters and the cost of their interpersonally deviant acts present both an accounting and a financial challenge. This is not to say the costs associated with workplace monsters have not been estimated. For example, Duffy *et al.* (2012) estimated that the various forms of interpersonal deviance (e.g. bullying, incivility, abuse, mistreatment and aggression) cost organisations were approximately US\$6 billion annually. The Australian Productivity Commission estimated the total national cost of workplace bullying alone was between \$6 billion and \$36 billion annually, triggering a parliamentary inquiry (Commonwealth of Australia, 2012). More ominously, recent research found that the active disengagement among employees that is being created by ‘managers from hell’ is costing the United States an estimated \$450 billion to \$550 billion annually (Gallup, 2013).

However, these data and cost estimations are based on research samples from industries, sectors and professions. To this end, these costs are not captured at the organisational level, nor do they feature within the accounting nor financial considerations of a given business; an issue we address in more detail a little later in the paper. We progress now to corporate governance aspects, which inherently involve delving further into cost considerations.

## 5. A corporate governance issue?

Having journeyed from global health through psychology and psychiatry with a brief sojourn in the human resources, accounting and finance isles, in this section, we continue our wicked problem expedition to explore two important corporate governance issues associated with workplace monsters. We begin with legal issues, which innately inform our second corporate governance focus, namely prudent financial management requirements. Note, the submission word limit demands we focus on our (Australian) context; however, we acknowledge legislative differences do exist across countries and endeavour to draw parallels with and include references to other jurisdictions where possible.

### 5.1. Legal issues

The legal consequences of employing workplace monsters are complex. For example, victims often make task performance errors, potentially leading to a faulty product or service being delivered. A consumer may complain to relevant protection agencies leading to fines under consumer law. In other settings, such as professional services, errors may have serious consequences (e.g. an oversight in the legal sector may result in the loss of a client's case) and result in a professional indemnity claim. Here, we focus on health and safety law and acknowledge but restrict any mention of other legal frameworks to sidebar status.

In the majority of Westernised countries, occupational health and safety (OHS) legislation includes physical *and* psychological safety (e.g. Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 {UK} Model Work Health and Safety Bill 2016 {Australia}, and Work Health and Safety Act, Queensland, 2014/2011; Commonwealth of Australia, 2011). Organisations are legally required to minimise the likelihood of psychological injury to employees, such as the development of depressive and anxiety disorders, through identifying and managing psychosocial risks. Directly relevant to our workplace monster discussion, known work-context psychosocial risk factors include but are not limited to bullying, harassment, verbal abuse, escalated conflict, poor leadership styles and conduct, assault, spreading rumours about someone, constant name-calling, undermining and sexual harassment (Michalak, 2015); all interpersonally deviant, aka workplace monster and behaviours.

Worker Compensation data indicate disturbing trends in psychological injury claims. While a decade plus of data demonstrates physical injuries and disease claims continue to decrease in frequency and severity, psychological injuries are on the rise (Comcare, 2015). This upward trend is occurring in spite of two significant legislative changes to the Safety, Rehabilitation, and Compensation Act 1988 (Cth) to tighten the causal connection test, which is used to establish whether the injury or disease is work-related, and if so, to what extent. The top two causal mechanisms in mental stress claims are work-

Table 6  
Case examples

Case	Description	Damages/Payouts
<b>Naidu</b> Nationwide News Pty Ltd v Naidu & Anor; ISS Security Pty Ltd v Naidu & Anor (2007) 71 NSWLR 471	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complex case involving bullying, harassment and racial discrimination of employee of a security company who performed his work at the premises of another company (contracted employee; 'host' employer)</li> <li>• Bullying and harassment over a prolonged period by a manager of the 'host' employer</li> <li>• Employee had complained regarding his treatment and had been observed to be distressed (including crying) and undergoing a change in personality</li> <li>• Employee developed severe mental illness, leading to serious personal consequences including relationship breakdown</li> <li>• Manager committing the bullying and victimisation well aware of complaints made and of the presence of signs of upset, distress and depression in victim</li> <li>• Employer and host employer failed to act appropriately to prevent and or address the work-related psychosocial risks experienced by employee</li> <li>• Deemed negligent for failing to provide a safe place of work</li> <li>• Case and damages upheld on appeal</li> <li>• Worker subjected to extensive abuse, sexual harassment and bullying by her colleagues</li> <li>• Victim was frightened and scared so tried to contact person responsible for HR who brushed complaint off by suggesting they just have a drink and chat about it</li> <li>• Victim was diagnosed with major depressive disorder, significant chronic post-traumatic stress disorder and bipolar II, caused by the treatment she received during her employment</li> <li>• Victim also suffers jaw injury caused from constant grinding of her teeth</li> </ul>	Against Nationwide News – \$1,946,189.40. Against ISS Security – \$1,767,050.56. Exemplary damages – \$150,000.00 Total: \$3.86 million <i>Plus costs, including indemnity costs.</i>
<b>Mathews</b> Kate Mathews v Winslow Constructors (Vic) Pty Ltd [2015]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Worker subjected to extensive abuse, sexual harassment and bullying by her colleagues</li> <li>• Victim was frightened and scared so tried to contact person responsible for HR who brushed complaint off by suggesting they just have a drink and chat about it</li> <li>• Victim was diagnosed with major depressive disorder, significant chronic post-traumatic stress disorder and bipolar II, caused by the treatment she received during her employment</li> <li>• Victim also suffers jaw injury caused from constant grinding of her teeth</li> </ul>	\$1.36 million for economic loss, pain and suffering <i>Plus costs</i>

(continued)

Table 6 (continued)

Case	Description	Damages/Payouts
<b>Wearne</b> Wearne v State of Victoria [2017] VSC 25 (8 February 2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A number of medical practitioners gave evidence that victim would require life-long psychiatric monitoring was unlikely to ever work again</li> <li>• Employer was negligent in failing to provide a safe working environment and allowing her to be subjected to this treatment</li> <li>• Employer breached duty of care, aggravated an existing psychological condition</li> <li>• Allegations included exposure to supervisory bullying and harassment, which exacerbated pre-existing chronic adjustment disorder</li> <li>• Employee unnecessarily exposed to psychiatric harm via negligent supervision by managers aware of pre-existing psychological fragility and its cause, and of a susceptibility to suffer psychiatric harm</li> <li>• Employee requested transfer to 'avoid' conflict, but was denied (was told to just 'sort it out')</li> <li>• While bullying claim not ultimately upheld, he court found that incidents in the lead-up to the plaintiff's breakdown could and should have been avoided, that HR failed to act, and employer failed to provide safe system of work</li> <li>• Judge: HR noticeably 'absent' despite being aware of escalating conflict; stated a formal complaint not required to act</li> <li>• Victim alleged numerous instances of manager acting towards her in a way that was aggressive, belittling, harassing or otherwise unreasonable</li> <li>• Judge generally accepted the appellant's evidence and concluded that manager regularly conducted herself in an unreasonable manner</li> <li>• Victim was owed a duty of care, and employer breached its duty of care</li> <li>• Court of appeal accepted that an employee had developed a psychiatric illness (depression and anxiety) as a result of her consistently excessive workload and the bullying conduct of her manager</li> <li>• Damages awarded took into consideration victim's age, and her limited time remaining in workforce (i.e. reduced amount for future economic losses)</li> </ul>	\$625,345.00 (After deductions) <i>Plus costs</i>
<b>Eaton</b> Eaton v TriCare (Country) Pty Ltd [2016] QCA 139	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Victim alleged numerous instances of manager acting towards her in a way that was aggressive, belittling, harassing or otherwise unreasonable</li> <li>• Judge generally accepted the appellant's evidence and concluded that manager regularly conducted herself in an unreasonable manner</li> <li>• Victim was owed a duty of care, and employer breached its duty of care</li> <li>• Court of appeal accepted that an employee had developed a psychiatric illness (depression and anxiety) as a result of her consistently excessive workload and the bullying conduct of her manager</li> <li>• Damages awarded took into consideration victim's age, and her limited time remaining in workforce (i.e. reduced amount for future economic losses)</li> </ul>	\$435,583.98 <i>Plus costs</i>

(continued)

Table 6 (continued)

Case	Description	Damages/Payouts
<p><b>Glencore</b>                      Haack v Workers' Compensation Regulator [2017] QIRC 115 (WC/2016/115)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mine worker who suffered permanent injury after being trapped on a remote Queensland site while suffering a mental breakdown from ongoing bullying and harassment by colleagues</li> <li>• Management and HR failed to attend to victim's immediate and obvious mental health and safety needs, responding with forcing the employee to remain on site, fill in forms and attend mediation meeting with bullies as part of formal complaints process, which victim did not want to pursue fearing other employees would find out he complained, and retaliate against him</li> <li>• Attendees of the meeting breached confidentiality and complaint became known to other employees, as feared by victim</li> <li>• Victim repetitively sought to leave site given their mental state and was not granted approval nor assisted to do so</li> <li>• Victim's spouse ultimately feared for their mental safety including possibility of self-harm acts, and called police who facilitated victim's departure from site</li> <li>• Victim diagnosed with adjustment disorder with mixed anxiety and depressed mood, generalised anxiety disorder, and social phobia as a result of the ordeal</li> <li>• Acceptance of the psychological injury claim as being caused by work opens door for common law proceedings for reckless negligence in failing to provide a safe workplace</li> </ul>	<p>Quantum of common law claim to be determined; expected to be multimillion                      Plus costs</p>

Payouts etc., in AU dollars.

related harassment and/or workplace bullying, and work pressures (e.g. overwork), which, in combination with sexual or racial harassment, account for 59 percent of all mental stress claims (Safe Work Australia, 2015). This majority percentage excludes a further 18 percent of claims due to exposure to workplace or occupational violence (which includes verbal threats and any form of indecent physical contact) or assault (including sexual assault), which may be perpetrated by a nonemployee or a *workplace monster*. Irrespective of this exclusion, clearly workplace monster style behaviour is driving the majority of psychological injury claims.

In addition to statutory fines imposed by the regulator, workers who are psychologically injured may pursue common law civil proceedings, seeking damages for negligence by their employer. Prosecutions in this space have resulted in significant financial payouts, extending into the millions (See Table 6 for case examples). Falling under antidiscrimination rather than safety law per se, with being sexually harassed at work constituting a hostile work environment and with antidiscrimination law damages being uncapped in several US states, two recent sexual harassment cases resulted in judgments for plaintiff payouts of \$US7.3 million (including \$US6.4 million in punitive damages) and – wait for it – *\$US168 million* (Roccanova, 2017).

Critically, unlike other risks within the workplace which organisations can insure against injuries and damages (e.g. public liability), common law cases are noninsurable; even the voluntary but widely held Director and Officer insurance does not cover breaches of health and safety law (Foster, 2011). In addition, while company directors have had a statutory obligation to ensure their companies meet OHS standards or face personal liability (e.g. fines) for some time (Harpur, 2008), recent revisions to Australian law have extended OHS responsibilities to include not only Directors, but anyone with a known level of control or decision-making capacity; termed ‘Officers’. Category 1 offences of reckless negligence can attract penalties of up to \$3 million for the organisation, and up to \$600,000 for an individual officer and/or up to 5-year imprisonment. Some states have taken the penalties even further, with Queensland recently introducing ‘Industrial Manslaughter’ legislation, which can result in up to a \$10 million fine, and or 20-year imprisonment (Queensland Government, 2017).

As other international examples, the United Kingdom’s Health and Safety (Offences) Act 2008 also dictates fines and or imprisonment for employers for violations of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, starting from £20,000 and 6 months, respectively. With alternative protective legal frameworks already in place (e.g. federal civil rights laws), the United States is now also moving towards specifically including bullying (as a form of aggression) in WHS law, with the #TimesUp initiative including efforts to create legislation that will penalise companies that tolerate harassment, and that will discourage the use of the nondisclosure agreements that have been used historically to silence victims of abuse (TimesUp, 2018).

Thus, additional legal frameworks and associated implications aside, failing to prevent or appropriately manage the risk of workplace monster behaviour occurring in the workplace is likely to constitute a failure to abide by health and safety law, potentially leading to regulatory enforcement and legal judgements, and or the incarceration of Officers. Failure to effectively manage workplace monster risk can also be a very expensive corporate governance mistake for organisations and their Officers, a timely segue into our second focal issue; financial prudence.

### 5.2. *Prudent financial management*

Across the globe, individuals leading businesses are subject to meet certain corporate governance requirements. For example, under the Corporations Act (2001) (Australian Government, 2018), Directors and Officers are legally obliged to exercise their powers and discharge their duties with due care and diligence, including effectively managing risks, and exercising sound business judgement in any decision to take or not take action in respect of a matter relevant to the business operations of the corporation (Part 2D. 1, 179–184). Breaches of the Act are punishable by fines and or imprisonment. While some minor jurisdictional differences exist, these corporate governance obligations can be summarised as an expectation that Directors and Officers will remain informed at all times of what is happening in the business by examining closely how any proposed actions will affect the company; especially if large amounts of money are involved. We loosely refer to these requirements as the obligation to be financially prudent.

We argue that workplace monsters present a significant corporate governance issue not only due to possible violations of, for example, health and safety law, but more broadly in terms of being a financial prudence issue. The human resource costs associated with the signs of workplace monsters mentioned earlier can be sizeable, for example, replacing an exited employee costs between 25 and 200 percent per cent of annual compensation – not including the human capital costs such as loss of organisational knowledge and service continuity, and lowered co-worker productivity and morale (Branham, 2000).

However, several other costs with corporate governance properties are also likely to be incurred. These include increases to insurance premiums, with Worker Compensation and Professional Indemnity risk algorithms both incorporating a ‘claims made’ loading (e.g. ‘experience-based rating’, Work-safe, 2017; costs of claims made and reinsurance costs, Commonwealth of Australia, 2005). The cost of settlements with the workplace monster victim – be these contained internally or result from legal proceedings – can be significant, as can be associated litigation costs (refer Table 6). If a victim whistle-blows externally (Dworkin and Baucus, 1998), the associated negative media coverage can damage employer and consumer branding, ultimately

leading to shareholder divestments. For example, in a sexual harassment scandal (Fraser-Kirk v. David Jones), the victim was reportedly paid \$AU850,000 to settle out of court, with about the same amount incurred by the employer in legal costs. However, \$1.7 million pales in comparison with the impact on David Jones shares; in the 24 h following the workplace monster's \$AU\$2 million 'resignation', a staggering 4.6 percent or \$AU\$100 million was wiped from the firm's book value (Greenblat, 2010). Shareholder activism, whereby shareholders agitate for change in corporate policy by exercising rights attached to shares held in a company, may also occur, with the changes sought often relating to corporate strategy and board member exits, with a view to (re) maximise shareholder value (Hendry *et al.*, 2007).

We contend that these workplace monster costs are avoidable expenses. Indeed, in our view, the foregoing begs the question as to why workplace monsters are not already considered key corporate governance issues, and, in turn, that more is not being done by organisations to prevent workplace monster presence and activity. We now move on to suggestions how this issue can be addressed.

## 6. Ways forward

We make two main suggestions; one that can be implemented at the organisational level with without delay, and a second ambitious suggestion that will require concerted, multidisciplinary efforts and time to develop.

### 6.1. Need to take the issue of workplace monsters seriously

A key issue is that leaders and managers (including Directors and Officers) appear unwilling to treat human resources management, and more specifically, workplace monster issues as having critical corporate government implications. Indeed, as Babiak *et al.* (2010) outline, in contrast to the criminal justice system, our knowledge of corporate psychopathy and its implications is limited largely because of the difficulty in obtaining the active cooperation of organisations; that is, organisational leaders would much rather 'not know', which keeps workplace monster behaviour (and costs) in the dark.

Underpinning this unwillingness is a wider tendency to avoid the 'intangibles' space. While investment in intangibles continues to increase, it remains a poor cousin to tangible assets, with investment in Australia in firm-specific human capital, organisational capital and brand equity asset category just 3 percent of GDP, compared to, for example, machinery and plant at 12 percent (OECD, 2011). This unwillingness brings us to our first suggestion, which centres on the critical role of HR in the workplace monster-cum-corporate-governance mess: Organisations not already doing so need to first commit to delving into the intangibles assets domain; aka intellectual capital, with an emphasis on human capital (e.g. see Seetharaman *et al.*, 2002; Edvinsson and Malone, 1997).



Accounting for intellectual capital provides the requisite foundation for critical analysis of, for example, employee turnover costs.

In other words, organisations need to adopt a human resources analytics approach, and actively gather relevant data in their own businesses, including but not limited to employee turnover, engagement, presenteeism and absenteeism. However, despite evidence linking this approach to organisational performance (Marler and Boudreau, 2016), HR analytics remain a relatively unknown and therefore unutilised strategic tool; an unfortunate state of affairs for which the HR profession is primarily responsible. As Ulrich (1998) noted some time ago, the human resources function tends to have a beleaguered reputation when it comes to articulating their contribution to organisational performance. To exercise strategic influence, human resources must conduct itself in a way that clearly articulates its performance contribution (Anonymous, 2017; van den Heuvel and Bondarouk, 2017). Failure to do so has previously seen and will continue to see HR excluded from the boardroom, where corporate governance issues and other strategic imperative discussions occur.

In this respect, we argue human resources practitioners play a critical role in whether their organisation will not only account for intangible assets such as human capital, but, in reference to our current workplace monsters discussion, (i) gather the data necessary to determine whether a workplace monster is present, and (ii) take action to address associated workplace monster issues. Indeed, in spite of the well-known adage (which is actually of unconfirmed origin), ‘Organizational culture eats strategy for breakfast’, few organisations conduct regular cultural surveys or make use of other analytics that would provide information on possible monsters, instead relying on formal complaints before (re)acting; a fundamentally flawed approach given 90 percent of employees do not report monster activities (Michalak, 2015). Interestingly, in *Wearne v State of Victoria* [2017] VSC 25 (refer Table 6), the Judge criticised what they referred to as the noticeable inaction by the HR function, explicitly referring to its failure to intervene in a known escalating conflict, and further declaring the absence of a formal complaint or grievance was not a reliable defence in the context. Additionally, as mentioned earlier, barely any organisations undertake any proactive measures such as pre-employment screening for workplace monster personalities, despite it being recommended (de Silva, 2014).

In other words, a competent human resource function cannot only potentially avoid hiring workplace monsters, but also actively monitor possible organisational level signs of workplace monster presence and activity. This analytical approach provides information to act on sooner rather than later, turns unknowns into knowns enabling a dollar figure to be attached, and, in cases of interventions, facilitates a return-on-investment calculation.

Fortunately (or unfortunately, as the case might be considered by some), legal frameworks are catching up with lax human resources. For example, under the expanded Officer definition applied in the Australian harmonised

model health and safety law, in addition to being prosecuted merely as workers, HR managers and directors in some businesses may now be classified as Officers, meaning they may be held personally liable for health and safety violations. In addition, newly introduced accessorial liability provisions (Section 550) mean human resource practitioners face personal fines for any organisational actions in violation of the *Fair Work Act (2009)*, reinforcing the need for human resources to ensure organisational leadership and management act lawfully, and fulfil their HR-centric corporate governance obligations.

## 6.2. Need to cost and to account for workplace monsters

A second, more ambitious suggestion to move this discussion forward is finance and accounting-based. It seems at this stage that organisations do not have a means of costing, and therefore formally accounting for, the financial losses associated with workplace monsters. Enter herein our BHAG, for which we leverage the existing but underutilised concept of intangible assets accounting to argue in favour of creating a framework for capturing the intangible costs of workplace monsters.

The principles of and examples applying intangible assets accounting are discussed in more detail in Chik (2017), Korinenko (2017), Ali (2016) and Linnenluecke *et al.* (2017). Interestingly, while methods now exist to place the environmental dimension of corporate sustainability on the balance sheet, methods to capture the human dimension – which specifically refers to human capital as integral to competitive advantage and incorporates human resources practices and labour relations, and their relationship to employee safety and health and organisational performance/profitability (see Dunphy *et al.*, 2007) – conspicuously remain missing.

AASB 138 of the Australian Accounting Standards defines intangible *assets* in terms of identifiability (separability from *goodwill*), control (entity has the power to obtain and to restrict access by others to, economic benefits related to asset use) and future economic benefit (revenue from the sale of products or services, cost savings or other benefits resulting from asset use).

We contend first that intangibles assets accounting principles could be adapted to account for intangible *costs* of workplace monsters as *liabilities*, and second, that evidence-based human resource analytics provide a base from which those costs can be quantified in dollar terms. Specifically, we argue that the organisation controls the source of *loss* in terms of controlling most *cost additions* resulting from the use of the liability, that is, from employing the monster (albeit not directly all costs; e.g. insurance may defer some). Linking to strategic competitive advantage and building upon Lockett *et al.*'s (2009) RBV-based discussion of intangible asset decay, we assert that employee turnover driven by workplace monster behaviour results in not only human capital losses (aka asset erosion) but that these exits lead also to structural (in terms of organisation) and relational capital losses that negatively affect remaining asset

interconnectedness levels. In other words, when an employee leaves their organisation, their team and or divisional structures are impacted, and the various beneficial relationships that employee established and maintained with other employees and or with clients/customers are also lost. These losses ultimately remove valuable links between organisational members and between organisational members and the market, reducing the value of structural and relationship components of overall intellectual capital assets. As a relevant add-on, we also contend that *badwill* can arise from poor employer and consumer branding associated with media exposure of workplace monster activities.

Generating a means to count the costs of workplace monsters would provide organisations an impetus to do more to manage these costs in a financially prudent manner, bringing workplace monsters out of the dark, and into the light.

## 7. Summary and conclusions

We commenced our essay with a wicked problem; a \$US1.15 trillion per annum productivity loss attributable to anxiety and depressive disorders. As confronting the ensuing content may have been regarding the undeniable contribution of workplace monsters to this global burden of disease, we re-emphasise that our scoping included only the most unwavering of internal – that is not client or customer – monsters. We also restricted our discussion to direct victims, meaning we have further underestimated the scale of the problem. In reality, not only are the victims damaged, but also bystanders and witnesses, for example through negative emotional contagion (Hatfield *et al.*, 1992). Further, when unreported and undisciplined, workplace monster behaviour becomes encultured; it becomes the new ‘norm’. A monsterly apple quite literally turns a good organisation into a bad barrel (Martinko *et al.*, 2017). Thus, by triggering far-reaching ripple effects, workplace monsters are an ‘*appreciating liability*’, and the expenses we refer to are but gross underestimates; a least-worst costs scenario. Workplace monster prevalence and their financial impacts are much higher realistically.

On a positive note, research shows that investing in mental health treatments leads to benefit to cost ratios of 2.3–3.0 if economic benefits only are considered, and 3.3–5.7 when the value of health returns is also included (Chisolm *et al.*, 2016). With some workplace monster victims suffering suicide ideation, we feel we have an ethical obligation to take action on this monstrous individual, organisational, and societal health and productivity issue. We argue that by finding ways to bring – and keep – workplace monsters out of the dark, we have the potential to make a significant and worthwhile difference to employees, employers and to society more broadly.

We acknowledge that realising our BHAG requires a multidisciplinary team, and the results of early efforts will be imperfect. Notwithstanding, we issue a call for others to take on our challenge, repeating the adage, ‘Measure what matters, because what gets measured gets done.’ We reinforce this call with our

version of another popular adage, ‘People can be your greatest assets, or your greatest liabilities.’

In closing, we apologise for and retract our earlier assertion that workplace monsters present a wicked problem. As Harris (2012) pleads, ‘Let’s also agree to stop using the term “wicked problems”. If everything becomes “wicked” or “super-wicked”, then everyone will just give up.... The outcomes of our decisions will necessarily be less than perfect, but that is actually okay. We need ... to encourage bright young people – in research and in government – to be filled with enthusiasm for spending their lives working on the big difficult problems of the time’.

Through combining various disciplines as we have done in this study, we hope we have started a conversation that, in future, renders workplace monsters not-such-a-wicked problem.

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